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A MANUAL FOR CONFESSORS

BEING A GUIDE TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE FOR THE USE OF PRIESTS OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH

BY
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LONDON
A. R. MOWBRAY & Co. LIMITED

First published in 1916
Reprinted 1916, 1917
Second edition, revised, 1931
Third edition, revised, 1936
Seventh impression, 1955

Printed in Great Britain by
A. R. Mowbray & Co. Limited in the City of Oxford
599

TO

MY DEAR FRIEND AND SPIRITUAL FATHER

THE LATE REV. G. C. OMMANNEY

FORMERLY VICAR OF S. MATTHEW'S, SHEFFIELD

THIS WORK

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

THIS book was first published twenty years ago, at the request of several brother priests who lamented the fact that there was no Anglican work of practical guidance for confessors. I think it can be fairly claimed that the book has met a need, and that it has not been superseded by any other work.

The contents of the volume remained practically unchanged until 1931, when a new and thoroughly revised edition was issued. It has become once more necessary to provide another edition, and I have again used the opportunity to revise the text, eliminate slight errors which have been discovered, and to introduce new subject-matter. I trust, therefore, that the reader will find this volume quite reliable as a text-book, and as a guide to modern, as well as ancient, authorities on the subject.

The following are the principal features which distinguish this edition, and that of 1931, from their predecessors. Certain sections have been rearranged, with the idea of making the sequence of thought easier for the reader; and practically all the quotations from Latin authors have been translated into English. Also the chapter on the Confessions of Youths and Girls has been subjected to a further revision.

Certain additional sections are included on subjects which have come into prominence in recent years. I would especially mention three of these. The first is the relation of psycho-analytical prac-

tice to the method of the confessional, which, I believe, has been seriously misunderstood. The second is an attempt to discuss, from the psychological point of view, the rationale of the confessional; this attempt seems both necessary and important in consequence of the misunderstanding I have emphasized. The third relates to the much debated question of the use of contraceptives in married life, and it is considered with special reference to the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference of 1930.

The Bibliography has again been entirely revised, and several important books which have appeared during the last four years have been included. It will be noticed that some of the works recommended are written in Latin; these are, as a rule, easily obtainable and the language is rarely of great difficulty. The possible exception is the 'Prima et Secunda Secundae' of the *Summa Theologica* of S. Thomas Aquinas, and this can conveniently be studied in the useful English version made by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. I am indebted to them and to their publishers, Messrs. Burns, Oates, & Washbourne, for permission to quote passages in the text of this book.

I would again express my sincere thanks to the Rev. J. G. Stobbart for his kindness in reading the proofs, and for the many valuable suggestions he has made during the work of revision.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO 1955 EDITION

The only distinctive change which has been made in the present Edition is a further revision of the Bibliography to bring it up to date and to supply one or two omissions of books of general and historical interest.

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PART I

THE NATURE OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

CHAPTER I

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Penance both a virtue and a sacrament—The virtue of Penance emphasized both in the Old and New Testament—The institution of the sacrament—Virtue of Penance recognized by Protestant sects—The sacrament of Penance in the English Church—Conclusion.

PENANCE is both a virtue and a sacrament. In its widest sense it may be defined as sorrow for some past action; but we may experience sorrow from various motives, and penance only becomes a virtue when the sorrow arises from some supernatural motive—for example, because we have offended against the law and majesty of God. Considered as a virtue it is not necessarily a virtue of itself, distinct from all other virtues. S. Thomas Aquinas holds that it belongs to the virtue of justice, since by it we perform an act of justice towards God.[1] It has also been pointed out that it is one of the effects of the virtue of religion, for if we hate our sins as an injustice done to God this implies that we acknowledge His sovereign goodness and majesty.

It is also well to note that penance is not only in agreement with the dictates of divine but also of natural law. If we do an injury to our neighbour we proceed to reconciliation by steps analogous to those taken in the sacrament of Penance. On per-

[1] *Summa Theologica* III, Q. lxxxv, art. 3.

ceiving our guilt in any matter, we first experience sorrow for what we have done ; this is Contrition. Our next step is to approach the person offended, and to acknowledge the wrong we have done him ; this is Confession. Finally we are willing to rectify as far as lies in our power the injuries done ; this is Satisfaction. It is worth while to quote S. Thomas on this matter. He says : 'Accordingly the matter of this sacrament pre-exists, being provided by nature ; since it is by a natural principle of reason that man is moved to repent of the evil he has done : yet it is due to Divine institution that man does penance in this or that way.' [1]

Although the sacrament of Penance is a sacrament of the New Law, the virtue of penance is repeatedly emphasized in the Old Testament ; in fact it is the predominant note sounded by the Prophets. There is no need to elaborate this point, which must be obvious to all readers of sacred Writ, but one or two examples may be given. The writer of Ecclesiasticus tells us that God will forgive sins. 'The Lord is full of compassion and mercy : And He forgiveth sins, and saveth in time of affliction.' [2] The prophet Joel exhorts his hearers to penance with the words, 'Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.' [3] The eternal cry of the Forerunner of our Blessed Lord was, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' ; and we are told that the people came to him on the banks of Jordan 'confessing their sins.' Our Lord, before the institution of the sacrament, is most insistent upon the need of penance. He says, 'I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' [4] And again, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' [5]

[1] *Summa* III, Q. lxxxiv, art. 7. [2] Ecclus. ii. 11.
[3] Joel ii. 13. [4] S. Luke v. 32, R.V. [5] S. Luke xiii. 3.

Any rite of the Church, if it is to be regarded as a sacrament, must have been 'ordained by Christ Himself.' The account of the institution of the sacrament of Penance is given in S. John's Gospel, chapter xx, verses 21–23: 'Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.' By the words, 'As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you,' our Lord, Who was about to withdraw His visible presence from this earth, transferred to His Apostles the mission He had received from the Father. It was a delegation of the power necessary to do the work entrusted to them. Next follows a solemn act of consecration, by which the Apostles were definitely set apart; 'He breathed upon them.' Then follow the explicit words relating to the forgiving and retaining of sins.[1] This 'power of the keys' which the Apostles received has been continued in the priesthood of the Catholic Church to the present day, and the use of the sacrament of Penance has been continuous also, although from time to time the details of its administration have differed. This is not the place to discuss the history of the development of the penitential disci-

[1] I am aware that certain critics would dispute our right to use these texts as establishing the divine origin of the sacrament of Penance. The interested reader may be referred, for a further consideration of the matter, to A. E. J. Rawlinson's *Studies in Historical Christianity*, chap. iii, and particularly p. 47 et seq. The author maintains that we find a fully developed sacramentalism in the Fourth Gospel, and that 'the things which the Spirit saith to the Churches' may be as important, in the matter of sacramental origins, as the remembered utterances of Christ Himself.

pline of the Church, but the interested reader will find in the late Mgr. Batiffol's *Etudes d'Histoire et de Théologie Positive* a learned and interesting monograph on the subject, entitled *Les Origines de la Pénitence.*[1]

Amongst Protestant sects in England the virtue of penance is generally recognized in varying degrees, although none of them believe in Penance as a sacrament. Notably amongst the Methodists and the Salvation Army there is a system of open acknowledgement of guilt, but it is left to the person confessing to leave out as many of his sins as he may think fit, and, of course, no absolution is given.

That the Catholic Church in England after the Reformation still retained the sacrament of Penance is proved both from a study of the Prayer Book and of history. In the Ordinal the words, 'Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained,' are said by the bishop when he lays his hands upon the candidate for the priesthood.[2] And in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick a rubric directs that 'here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort,' and the full judicial form of Absolution follows. During the Caroline period of the Church's history sacramental confession was extensively made use

[1] The reader may also consult O. D. Watkins, *A History of Penance.*

[2] The significance of the retention of these words is emphasized when we remember that they cannot claim greater antiquity in the Ordinal than the thirteenth century. Such features as 'the tradition of the instruments' were deliberately omitted on the ground that they could not be justified by ancient custom. cp. A. R. Whitham, *Holy Orders*, p. 120.

of, particularly amongst the nobility. Several works on Moral Theology were written before the rise of the Oxford Movement. Bishop Jeremy Taylor is the most prominent author, and his *Ductor Dubitantium* and *The Doctrine and Practice of Repentance* need special mention. Bishop Hall's four books of Ethics, to be found in his collected works, are also famous. We may also note Bishop Sanderson's *De Conscientia* ; William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* and his *Treatise on Christian Perfection* ; Nathaniel Marshall's *Penitential Discipline* ; and William Wilberforce's *Practical View of the Religious System of Professed Christians*. This is by no means a complete list, but a study of those indicated will be of great interest to priests wishing to know something about pre-Tractarian thought on this subject.

To conclude and recapitulate. We have seen that our Blessed Lord gave to His Apostles and to their successors the power of forgiving and retaining sins. This power is judicial, and the exercise of it constitutes the sacrament of Penance, the object of which is to reconcile the sinner to God. The outward sign of the sacrament consists of two parts : (*a*) the acts of the penitent, viz. contrition, confession, and satisfaction ; and (*b*) the absolution given by the priest, who is God's representative. The grace conferred by the sacrament is the forgiveness of all sins, venial and mortal, committed after baptism, together with the remission of the whole of the eternal punishment, and at least part of the temporal punishment due to sin. There is, in addition, an infusion of sanctifying grace, which entitles the recipient to certain actual graces, helping him to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, to amend his life, withstand temptation, and to guard against relapse into sin.

CHAPTER II

THE NECESSITY OF THE SACRAMENT

Necessary for all who have fallen into mortal sin after baptism —The question of ' compulsory confession '—The duty of the parish priest to instruct his people.

WE have seen in the previous chapter that the sacrament of Penance is the divinely-appointed means by which Christians, who have fallen into mortal sin after baptism, receive forgiveness ; and when any one has come to recognize the truth of this statement he is under a moral obligation to make use of the sacrament. We should be guilty of the sin of presumption if, after being intellectually convinced, we persisted in vainly trying to find another way—always an easier one—of obtaining forgiveness.

It may happen, however, that a person finds himself in mortal sin, and is unable from some grave cause (such as his inability to find a priest to hear his confession) to receive the sacrament of Penance. In such a case it is the unanimous teaching of moralists that an act of perfect contrition will suffice, but it must be remembered that an act of contrition always includes the intention to confess so soon as the opportunity offers. Those persons who only fall into venial sin are not under any *obligation* to go to confession, but as a matter of fact in practice they often use the sacrament, and it is a right and proper action to take. Frequent confession is a powerful means of developing the

spiritual life, and a most salutary discipline, for we all need the sacramental grace given in Penance.

One frequently hears the statement, ' Confession is not *compulsory* in the Anglican Church.' This has always seemed to the author quite a wrong way of putting the case. What is the meaning of the expression ' compulsory confession ' in the Roman communion ? Simply this, that every one is bound to go to confession and to receive Holy Communion at least once a year ; this is technically known as ' the Paschal precept.' Any one not conforming to the Paschal precept has disobeyed the law of the Church, and cannot be regarded as a practising Catholic.[1]

There is no such rule in the Anglican communion, and no priest can refuse communion to one of his parishioners who does not come to confession. In this sense, then, confession is not ' compulsory.' But what is the real significance of this ? Simply that the Anglican Church has, rightly or wrongly, placed the responsibility of receiving the sacrament of Penance, when it is needed, upon the *individual*, and refrains from legislating upon the subject. We may here notice the words of Bishop Montague on the Anglican teaching with regard to penance :

> It is confessed that all priests, and none but priests, have power to forgive sins ; it is confessed that private confession unto a priest is of very ancient practice in the Church, of

[1] It is generally agreed amongst modern Roman Catholic theologians that the precept of annual confession does not bind persons who have committed only venial sin during the year (see H. Davis, *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, Vol. III, p. 346). S. Thomas Aquinas held that the precept of the Church was satisfied if the person presented himself to the priest and told him that he had no mortal sins to confess (*Summa*, Suppl. Q. vi, art. 3).

excellent use and practice, being discreetly handled. We refuse to none if men require it ; if need be have it. We urge and persuade it in extremes ; we require it in cases of perplexity, for quieting of men disturbed, and their consciences.[1]

This removing of responsibility to the individual in no way excuses the parish priest from teaching his people definitely and clearly the necessity of the sacrament. In fact, it puts an additional responsibility upon him to teach most carefully, so that his people may not approach the altar in a state of mortal sin. In the case of a person in danger of death he is called upon to be even more insistent ; the rubric directs that ' the sick person be *moved* to make a special confession of his sins.' In view of this rubric, an unbiased moralist could not fail to rule that a parish priest would be gravely remiss in his duties if he failed to impress upon the sick person the urgent necessity of making his confession. This obligation to urge the use of the sacrament will also bind in cases where the person, although not sick, is still in danger of death ; as, for instance, a criminal under sentence of death, one setting out upon a dangerous enterprise, or a woman before her first confinement.

In the ordinary course of parochial work it would appear that the priest will have performed his duty if he carefully explains to his people at frequent intervals, by sermons, addresses, and other suitable means, the necessity of receiving this sacrament. If the people do not then respond to his teaching the fault lies with them and not with him, as he has done his best to bring them to the sacrament. It is fatal to teach that Penance is ' optional.' It is neither ' optional ' nor ' compulsory.' Once a priest allows his people to assume that there are

[1] *A Gag for the New Gospel.*

two ways of receiving absolution, one easy and the other hard, he may expect to find his confessional unfrequented, for he ministers to frail human beings who will almost inevitably attempt to ' rationalize ' their desires, and choose the easier way.

CHAPTER III

THE MATTER OF THE SACRAMENT

'Proxima materia' and *'remota materia'*—'Necessary' and 'free' matter—Insufficiency of matter—Cases in which a vague confession will suffice.

THE 'outward sign' in the sacrament of Penance, in common with all the other sacraments, has its *matter* and *form*. The matter is the acts of the penitent; contrition, confession, and satisfaction. It will at once be seen that the matter of Penance differs from that of the other sacraments in that it is not *some material thing or things*. For this reason the Council of Trent calls the acts of the penitent *quasi-materia*. The matter of the sacrament is sub-divided into *proxima materia*, which consists of the acts which the penitent has to perform, and the *remota materia*, which is post-baptismal sin committed by the penitent.

It is a priest's duty, as the divinely appointed minister of the sacraments, to take care that they are properly administered. If, for instance, he knowingly administered the sacrament of Baptism with some material other than water he would be guilty of grave sin. So in this sacrament the priest cannot give absolution unless the proper matter is present. It is necessary, therefore, for us to consider the subject in more detail.

The remote matter of Penance is divided into 'necessary matter' and 'free matter.' All mortal sins committed after baptism, and not yet con-

fessed, are necessary matter—i.e. it is necessary that they should be submitted to the power of the keys. It is not sufficient to confess these sins in general terms, but the number, species, and circumstances should be mentioned. For instance, it is not enough for a penitent to say, 'I have stolen things.' He should specify the nature of the things stolen, their value, etc. To steal from a church is not only stealing, but also sacrilege. Venial sins are called 'free matter' because there is not the same obligation to confess them as in the case of mortal sins. They are, however, sufficient matter, so that if a penitent confesses only venial sin the priest would give absolution. Mortal sins, which have been previously confessed and absolved, are also free and sufficient matter for the sacrament.

In ordinary circumstances the confessor will have little difficulty with regard to the matter of the sacrament. The majority of his penitents will at least confess venial sins, and he will be able to give absolution with certainty. But cases are bound to occur, sooner or later in his ministerial career, when he will find that sufficient matter has not been provided. Let us briefly consider some such cases. It not infrequently happens that old and poorly educated people, living quiet and secluded lives, come to confession and accuse themselves in some such general terms as the following: 'I have gone on all right since I came to you last, and have not done anything bad that I can remember. I am very sorry if I have done anything wrong.' Obviously this is not a confession, and the priest cannot give absolution. He can, however, by questioning on a few of the lesser sins, generally obtain sufficient matter. Such questions should refer to carelessness in prayer, wasting time,

irritability, dissatisfaction, loss of temper, etc. If this fails he should ask the penitent to mention some mortal sin previously confessed, and absolution may then be given.

One would suggest that this class of penitent should not be discouraged from coming to confession. In most cases they are really good people, but without much realization of sin, and by coming to confession they will not only obtain a deeper sense of sin, but may in time be able the better to realize their venial sins, and so be provided with a means of deepening their spiritual life. Another class do not make good confessions because they have not been properly instructed on the subject. In such cases the priest should tactfully suggest that he would like to instruct them further, and make an appointment for that purpose.

There are certain cases in which a vague confession (although there be necessary matter) may be accepted. All these are cases of extreme necessity. (*a*) At the approach of death, when the penitent's condition is such that he cannot make a detailed confession, a general acknowledgement of sin will suffice. The Roman Church allows absolution to be given to an unconscious person who has previously expressed his desire to confess.

(*b*) In cases of impending death absolution may be given without detailed confession. The stock example is in the case of shipwreck. This specific case is provided for in the Book of Common Prayer. In the 'Forms of Prayer to be Used at Sea' a rubric states that 'When there shall be imminent danger, as many as can be spared from necessary service in the Ship shall be called together, and make an humble Confession of their sin to God: In which every one ought seriously to reflect upon those particular sins of which his conscience shall

accuse him ; saying as followeth.' Then follows the confession used in the Communion Service. After this has been said a rubric directs, ' Then shall the Priest, if there be any in the Ship, pronounce this Absolution.' The precatory form of absolution is given.

Let us now suppose a case in which impending death is anticipated. A priest is called upon to minister to a man who has had a serious accident. He is conscious but dying, and is sufficiently instructed in the Faith to desire absolution. The priest would at once ask him to mention one or two sins specially troubling his conscience ; without waiting for further confession he would at once absolve him, simply using the words, ' I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.' If the man recovered sufficiently, he should, of course, complete his confession. In a railway accident, pit explosion, etc., a priest should not spend much time with one victim of the disaster, as there may be many others desirous of his ministrations.

(*c*) Moralists allow that when a penitent is too ignorant or feeble-minded (not insane) to make an accurate confession, even with the confessor's help, he may be absolved if he has not received absolution for a long time.

CHAPTER IV

THE FORM OF THE SACRAMENT

What is essential to the form—Additional prayers used—Method of giving absolution—The presence of the penitent necessary for valid absolution.

THE form consists of the words which the priest says over the penitent. The Prayer Book Office for the Visitation of the Sick directs that when the confession has been made, the priest shall absolve the penitent as follows : ' Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences : And by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.'

S. Thomas teaches that the words ' I absolve thee ' are the most fitting form of this sacrament.[1] The words ' from all thy sins' are indicated both by the confession of the penitent and the absolution of the priest, but they should not be omitted in practice. Our Lord made no mention of the Blessed Trinity in the institution of the sacrament, so the words ' In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen ' cannot be considered of the essence of the form ; but they express the fact that the priest absolves from sin by the power of God. In cases

[1] *Summa* III, Q. lxxxiv, art. 3.

of extreme necessity the priest would use the shorter form, 'I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen'; otherwise the full form given in the Prayer Book should always be used.

As previously mentioned, in such cases as shipwreck, before battle, etc., many persons may be absolved at the same time, and the plural form, 'I absolve *you* from all *your* sins,' may be used and is valid.

At the Savoy Conference the Protestants objected to the indicative form of absolution being used. They wished to make it not only declaratory, but also conditional, viz. 'I pronounce thee absolved, if thou dost truly repent and believe.' To this the bishops replied, 'The form of absolution in the liturgy is more agreeable to the Scriptures than that which they desire, it being said in S. John xx, "Whose sins you remit, they are remitted," not, Whose sins you pronounce remitted, and the condition needs not to be expressed, being always necessarily understood.' [1]

By common consent additional prayers are also used. Before the penitent begins his confession the priest addresses him, using some such words as these: 'The Lord be in thy heart, and upon thy lips, that thou mayest worthily and rightly confess thy sins. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.' When the priest is about to give absolution he first says, 'Almighty God have mercy upon thee, forgive thee thy sins, and bring thee to everlasting life. Amen.' He then raises his right hand towards the penitent, saying, 'May the Almighty and Merciful Lord grant thee pardon, absolution,

[1] E. Cardwell, *History of Conferences*, pp. 332, 361 Quoted from W. W. Webb, *Cure of Souls*, p. 51.

and remission of thy sins. Amen.' Then follows the form of absolution, the priest making the sign of the Cross with his hand at the name of the Blessed Trinity. He should not stand up while giving the absolution, nor should he lay his hand on the head of the penitent, or touch him in any way. The following prayer is often added : ' The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the Saints, whatsoever good thou hast done, or evil thou hast endured, be to thee for the remission of sins, the increase of grace, and the reward of eternal life. Amen.'

In order that the penitent may receive absolution he must be morally present—that is, at least within the sound of the ordinary voice. It consequently follows that absolution cannot be given by letter. John Keble, in his *Spiritual Letters*, says : ' Advice may, of course, be given in writing, but absolution must be given in person.' It is not, however, necessary that the penitent should *hear* the words of absolution. In fact, it is advisable that the priest should accustom himself to give the absolution in a low voice. The use of confessional boxes is by no means common in the Anglican Church, and moreover the words of absolution, being well known, may easily be heard a considerable distance in a quiet church. As a matter of fact, unless the penitent be a little deaf, he will hear quite easily what the priest says, even if he speaks in a very low voice. In infectious cases a priest may validly absolve from the window or door of the sick room, but there seems little need for this now ; if a priest is careful to observe the precautions used against infection,[1] he need have no scruple in entering an infected room.

[1] cp. pp. 250–255.

Roman Catholic theologians have considered the question, whether or not absolution may be given by telephone. The official reply of the Poenitentiaria, delivered July 1, 1884, was, 'No answer need be given.' From this certain authorities have inferred that the practice may be considered legitimate in cases of extreme necessity; but others maintain that it is always invalid.[1]

[1] See D. M. Prümmer, *Manuale Theologiae Moralis*, Vol III, p. 230, where the matter is discussed at some length.

PART II

THE ESSENTIAL PARTS OF THE SACRAMENT

CHAPTER I

CONTRITION: ITS NATURE AND QUALITIES

Definition of contrition—Its nature—How to obtain contrition when it is absent—Perfect contrition proceeds from love—S. Thomas Aquinas on love—Perfect contrition restores the sinner to grace—Imperfect contrition—Why it will suffice—S. Thomas Aquinas on fear—The qualities of contrition: internal, supernatural, supreme, universal—Signs by which a confessor may recognize the presence of contrition—Contrition must exist at least when absolution is given—How to discover the absence of contrition—The custom of reminding penitents to come to their confession.

CONTRITION consists of three definite acts: (i) a hearty sorrow for sin committed, (ii) a thorough detestation of these sins, and (iii) a firm resolution to sin no more. This is well brought out in the beautiful collect for Ash Wednesday: 'Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness.' Jeremy Taylor, in his *Holy Living*, points out the true nature of contrition:

He that repents truly, is greatly sorrowful for his past sins; not with a superficial sigh or tear, but a pungent afflictive sorrow; such a sorrow as hates the sin so much, that the man would choose to die rather than act it any more. This sorrow is called in Scripture 'a weeping sorely; a weeping with bitterness of heart; a weeping day and night; a sorrow of heart; a breaking of the spirit; mourning like a dove and chattering like a swallow'; and we may read the degree and

manner of it by the lamentations and sad accents of the prophet Jeremy, when he wept for the sins of the nation; by the heart-breaking of David, when he mourned for his murder and adultery.[1]

Since contrition occupies the most prominent place in the acts of the penitent, it is necessary that it should be considered somewhat in detail.

(i) Contrition must be a hearty sorrow, *contritio cordis*; as the prophet Joel says, 'Rend your hearts, and not your garments.' A mere speculative sorrow, *dolor intellectivus*, is not sufficient. Why this is so is easily shown. The human reason often quite clearly recognizes the hatefulness of sin, but the will still holds to it, and the evil course is persisted in. How often a drunkard will talk freely of his folly in pursuing his evil courses, but makes no attempt at reformation. If we recognize that all moral acts proceed from the will, we shall see—since sorrow for sin is a moral act—that contrition must originate, not in the intellect, but in the will. Hooker says:

Contrition doth not here import those sudden pangs and convulsions of the mind which cause sometimes the most forsaken of God to retract their own doings; it is no natural passion or anguish, which riseth in us against our wills, but a deliberate aversion of the will of man from sin. . . . The chiefest thing in contrition is that alteration whereby the will, which was before delighted with sin, doth now abhor and shun nothing more.[2]

We would recommend the need of emphasizing this, both when teaching on the subject of contrition and when giving spiritual direction. We may also add, as a warning to confessors, that, generally speaking, there is far more danger of a sacrilegious confession arising from lack of contri-

[1] *Holy Living*, Chapter IV, section ix.
[2] *Ecclesiastical Polity*, VI. iii. 5.

tion than from careless self-examination, or even wilful concealment of sin. Let us also notice that contrition must be *personal*. It is not a general detestation of the sin we see around us, either in the abstract or as shown in certain individuals, that is required, but a sincere sorrow for the sins which we ourselves have committed.

(ii) Contrition also comprises a thorough detestation of the sins we have committed. One who longs after God will hate all things which form a barrier between himself and the Object of his desire; sin is the greatest barrier of all. The feeling of guilt or remorse, *terrores conscientiae*, is not of the essence of true sorrow. The reason is that we may feel remorse even against our will; it is often caused by the fear of being found out, or because of an acute sensitiveness to public opinion.

(iii) Finally, contrition includes a firm resolution to sin no more. This is, of course, a necessary corollary to the preceding conditions; if we have a hearty sorrow for, and detestation of, our sins, we shall also desire, being free from them, not to fall into them again. It affords, therefore, a test as to the reality of our sorrow and hatred of sin. If the desire to amend is not present, we may be sure that there is no contrition. It would be the duty of a priest to refuse absolution if he could not persuade the penitent to promise to try to give up his evil ways. But it must be noticed that the converse is not always true, i.e. that where there is purpose of amendment there is contrition. A resolution to amend *of itself* is no proof of contrition. A man may give up sin because he is injuring his health, or because the desire to commit sin has ceased, or because he has indulged in it to excess and is satiated.

Leaving, for the present, the external signs by

which a priest may judge if his penitent has contrition or not, we will now consider the means that should be used to obtain contrition when it is absent.[1] (i) The sinner desiring to obtain contrition should, in the first place, be directed to the importance of making an act of faith. He must clearly recognize that he is responsible to God for his actions, and that he has betrayed his position of trust by his sins. He must believe that God hates sin, and being a God of justice will punish unrepented sin. (ii) He should also be directed to make an act of hope. He must rest his hope in God's mercy, that He will forgive him his sins. Our hope, moreover, lies in the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour, Who made atonement for our sins on the Tree of the Cross. These acts of faith and hope are the foundation of contrition. (iii) The penitent will now have a knowledge of the hatefulness of sin, of the punishment which is meted out to sinners, and finally a knowledge of the mercy of God whereby he may be forgiven. The evil being recognized by the intellect, the will must now desire to avoid the evil. This causes a hatred of those past sins which have caused the evil. (iv) From this hatred should follow a real sorrow that the sins have been committed. The penitent will now see the evil consequences of sin, how it has cut him off from God, and made him the betrayer of one Who loves him. (v) From this will arise a sincere resolve never to sin any more. And finally (vi) there will be a desire to render satisfaction to God for sins committed, and a willingness to accept any chastisement from God as a punishment for those sins.

[1] The following scheme is based upon the suggestions given in C. E. Schieler and H. J Heuser, *The Theory and Practice of the Confessional.*

PERFECT CONTRITION

Contrition is either perfect or imperfect, according to the motive of the sorrow experienced. Perfect contrition has as its motive the pure love of God. It is disinterested. From the very fact that the sinner loves God above all things, and for His own sake, he has sorrow for his sins. But it is not given to us always to experience this pure disinterested sorrow, and there is an imperfect contrition, or *attrition*, as it is sometimes called, which, while being of less efficacy than perfect contrition, yet is a good sorrow, and serves as a disposition for receiving the sacrament of Penance. Imperfect contrition is not purely disinterested. There is, indeed, a supernatural sorrow for sin, but it arises out of less worthy motives than the pure love of God, such as the fear of hell, or the hatefulness of sin. It will be seen that attrition is very different from remorse and other forms of natural sorrow, in that it has a *supernatural* motive. Purely natural sorrow is absolutely insufficient for the sacrament.

Since perfect contrition proceeds from perfect love, we may profitably consider the essential features of the latter. Love is dealt with in the *Prima Secundae* of the *Summa Theologica*, to which the reader is referred for detailed treatment of the subject. The love we have for God differs in degree according to the aspect under which God is presented to us as an object to be loved. Our love may be pure, *amor benevolentiae*, or it may be selfish, *amor concupiscentiae*. The pure love of God is called perfect, the other imperfect. In perfect love, God is loved for His own sake, without any thought of personal reward. This *amor benevolentiae* is set forth in the hymn commonly

attributed to S. Francis Xavier,[1] and S. Teresa had it in mind when she expressed the wish that the fires of hell might be quenched, and the beauties of heaven consumed, so that men might learn to love God for Himself alone. Although it cannot be denied that many saintly souls have possessed this love to a wonderful degree, still on this earth no love can be so absolutely disinterested as to exclude all thought of self. Consequently we find that with the majority of individuals the love they have for God is mixed with varying degrees of love of self. This is not in all cases bad ; in fact, we may say that generally it is good, for, by a gradual elimination of the element of selfish love, the soul may rise to a more perfect love of God. For instance, the love arising from gratitude, *amor gratitudinis*, comes very near to perfect love ; in fact, it is perfect love if God is regarded in His benevolence as the source of all good to mankind. We must, however, notice that there is a purely selfish love, *amor mercenarius*, which looks only to the reward to be obtained, and totally eliminates the idea of God as a Person to be loved. Such love —if indeed it can be called love—has no supernatural value. So there is a direct ratio between love and contrition. All sorrow that arises from perfect love is perfect contrition, and as there are varying degrees of unselfish love, so there are varying degrees of contrition.

Perfect contrition, in whatever degree it may be present, at once restores the sinner to grace, even before he has received the sacrament of Penance. We must remember, however, that the desire and intention to receive the sacrament must be present. In fact, if it were absent the contrition would not be perfect, since a perfect sorrow would include

[1] *A.& M.* 106 ; *E.H.* 80.

a desire to receive forgiveness in the way appointed by God. There are, with us, certain good people who have long been in the habit of making really devout communions but have never been to confession, generally because they have not been taught the need of it. It often happens that a priest has difficulty in getting them to make a first confession. Their objection is that they know that God has helped them in the past, and that they have received grace from their communions without previous confession; why, then, should they now begin to make use of the sacrament? A recognition of the fact that perfect contrition restores to grace ought to be a great help to them. The priest might point out that God deals kindly with souls, that He did not reveal Himself all at once to His chosen people the Jews, and that He has revealed Himself gradually to the individuals in question. In the past, when they did not recognize the need of confession, God accepted what they had to give Him, but now they have been led to see things in a different light; if they really are devout and love God, they will wish to do His will in preference to their own, no matter what may be the inconvenience to themselves.

The resolution to confess one's sins, embodied in the act of perfect contrition, does not mean that the confession need be made *as soon as possible*, although common sense will show that it would not be wise to delay receiving absolution for very long. It is the common teaching of moralists that a perfect act of contrition, in addition to restoring the sinner to a state of grace, also remits the eternal punishment due to sin, and at least a part of the temporal. That there is, in fact, an anticipation of the effects brought about by the reception of the sacrament of Penance.

IMPERFECT CONTRITION

Imperfect contrition differs from perfect contrition not only in its motive but also in its efficacy. It is unable, *per se*, to restore the penitent to grace, and to it must be joined the reception of the sacrament of Penance. Our consideration of perfect contrition has indirectly proved that imperfect contrition will suffice as a disposition for receiving the sacrament. For, from the institution of the sacrament, we are bound to believe that the Church received the power of the keys, by which her ministers bind or loose from sin ; if, however, perfect contrition were *necessary* for the receiving of the sacrament, the disposition of the penitent, and not the power of the keys, would be the means by which the sins were forgiven. Or, to put it another way, ' A remedy for a disease would be a poor gift if it could not cure the disease until the latter was already removed.'[1]

It has been stated[2] that imperfect contrition, while being a supernatural sorrow for sin, arises out of less worthy motives than the pure love of God, such as fear of punishment and hatefulness of sin. S. Thomas deals with the question of fear under the general heading, ' De dono timoris.'[3] We may note three kinds of fear that he mentions, and which are connected with our subject : (i) *timor servilis*, which causes a man to avoid sin because of the punishment he knows God inflicts ;

[1] Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, p. 90. For a more detailed discussion of this difficult subject than is here possible, see my *Belief and Conduct*, p. 147. In this essay I have attempted to reply to the criticism made by Dr. Hastings Rashdall on the doctrine of attrition in his Bampton Lectures, *The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology*, p. 387.

[2] p. 27. [3] *Summa* II–II, Q. xix.

(ii) *timor filialis*, or filial fear, by which the son fears to offend his Father; (iii) a mixture of the two former, in which he fears to sin because of its punishment, and also because it offends God. This is called *timor initialis*.

'We are dealing,' S. Thomas says, 'with fear now insomuch as by it we are in any way either turned to God, or turned away from Him. Sometimes man for the evil that he fears withdraws from God; and this is called *human* or *mundane* fear. Sometimes, again, man for the evil that he fears turns to God and cleaves to Him. The evil in the latter case is twofold—the evil of punishment and the evil of fault. If, then, one turns to God and cleaves to Him for fear of punishment it will be *servile fear*; but if for fear of fault it will be *filial fear*, for it is proper to sons to fear offending their father. But if it is for fear of both it is *initial fear*, which is a mean between the two.' [1]

Imperfect sorrow, arising from *timor servilis*, and including both the hope of pardon and desire of amendment, is held to be a sufficient disposition for the reception of the sacrament. There have been from time to time in the past many controversies amongst moralists as to the sufficiency of attrition together with the sacrament of Penance to remit sin. The whole question is fully discussed, and the cases of the contending parties set forth with great clearness, in Schieler-Heuser, *The Theory and Practice of the Confessional*, pp. 91–98, to which the interested reader is referred.[2]

Contrition must have the following four notes or qualities if the sacrament is to be validly received. It must be (i) internal; (ii) supernatural; (iii) supreme; (iv) universal.

(i) *Contrition must be internal.*—This has already been dealt with in discussing the definition of

[1] Translation taken from J. Rickaby, *Aquinas Ethicus*.

[2] Considerable use has been made of this work in this and the preceding section; all references used have been verified.

contrition. The sorrow of the penitent must be true and sincere. It is a safeguard against a mere mechanical examination of conscience, and making one's confession as a part of one's spiritual routine. The priest, in instructing his penitents, should avoid too great laxity on the one hand, and rigour on the other, with regard to the sorrow required. If he simply aims at the irreducible minimum, the danger of mechanical confessions without any real sorrow will be present. But, on the other hand, if he is constantly setting up a very high standard of contrition there will be a great danger of his penitents despairing of ever attaining to such a degree of sorrow, and consequently they will abstain from receiving both Penance and Holy Communion. In other words, let him follow the example of our Lord, Who always dealt mercifully with sinners, and chose the gentler rather than the harder way. Perhaps the solution of the difficulty lies in the confessor's kind and fatherly attitude to the penitent and in his being *suaviter in modo*, but not the less *fortiter in re*.

(ii) *Contrition must be supernatural.*—This has also been previously mentioned. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that 'without faith it is impossible to please God.'[1] The sacrament of Penance is a supernatural means provided by God for the forgiveness of sin, and the *motive* which leads the recipient to seek that gift must also be supernatural. Consequently no natural sorrow based upon the temporal evils resulting from sin will suffice. It is not enough to be sorry because sin has resulted in loss of health, good name, or worldly possessions. The sorrow must have direct reference to God, and be based upon faith in Him. It will be seen that natural sorrow is absolutely

[1] Heb. xi. 6.

distinct from supernatural sorrow; it is a difference, not of degree, but of *kind*, and no amount of natural sorrow, however great it may be, will suffice for the sacrament.

(iii) *Contrition must be supreme.* — The sinner must regard sin as the greatest of all evils, since by it he has offended God, and is separated from Him. Consequently, if this quality is present, the penitent will be willing to follow his confessor's advice in avoiding the occasions of sin. He will be prepared to do anything, no matter how great may be the inconvenience to himself, in order to avoid sin in the future. The result of supreme sorrow will be further touched upon when dealing with the purpose of amendment.

(iv) *Contrition must be universal.*—That is, it must extend to every mortal sin committed. A person would obviously be unfitted for absolution if, while repenting of the sins of anger and gluttony, he still refused to repent of the sin of lust. In order to fulfil this condition it is enough if the *motive* is universal, and extends to all sins. An act of contrition need not be elicited for each separate sin committed. Since venial sin does not rob us of the friendship of God, this property of universality does not apply to venial sin; still, if the penitent have only venial sin to confess, the other properties mentioned must be present.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON CONTRITION

The duties of the priest with regard to contrition are twofold. He has to teach his people so that they may understand what true contrition is; and when they come to him for confession he has to decide whether they possess this contrition or not.

It is proposed, first of all, to point out some of the signs which show that contrition is present.

This is by no means an easy task, and is sure to be somewhat inadequate. Diagnosis is somewhat in the nature of a gift; to some confessors it comes almost by instinct, while others, despite the fact that they may have considerable technical knowledge, experience much difficulty in forming a judgement. So some confessors can tell at once if contrition is weak or absent, and they will proceed, by suitable means, to try to bring the penitent to a better frame of mind. If they are questioned as to how they know, they often cannot give any adequate or useful reason. In the early days of the Oxford Movement a priest was not much exercised about the question of the disposition of the penitent. Confessions were far less frequent than they are at present, and it was generally safe to assume that the fact that the penitent himself was willing to confess was a sufficient sign of contrition. But things are different now; confessions have become far more frequent, and a new generation has sprung up which has been taught the Catholic faith from the cradle, and looks upon confession as quite a normal state of things. It has become, therefore, increasingly important that a confessor should be able to know if his penitents are really properly disposed, or if they have simply come to confession as a matter of form, or without real sorrow.

The following remarks are only intended as general indications: (1) The priest is doubtful about the disposition of his penitent and asks, 'Are you really sorry for your sins?' If the penitent replies that he is sure that he has true sorrow, his word must be taken, for it is contrary to the principle of the administration of the sacrament to doubt a positive statement made by the penitent. A priest would not, of course, ask this

question unless he was satisfied that the penitent knew what was meant by true contrition; otherwise he would instruct him. (2) If the penitent expresses a readiness to forsake his sins, the priest may look upon it as one of the signs of contrition. (3) Also, if advice given in previous confessions with regard to overcoming sins has been taken, and at least some effort has been made to fight against the sin, he will look upon this as a favourable sign. (4) If the *number* of the sins has been less since a previous confession the priest may be sure that the penitent was on that occasion contrite, and the fact that he is again making use of the sacrament is an indication that the disposition continues. (5) If the penitent expresses his readiness to forgive, it is a sign that the proper disposition is present. (6) Also a penitent who is ready and willing to make satisfaction shows that he has true contrition. (7) The manner in which the penitent makes his confession, his demeanour, visible signs of grief and distress, the language he uses, etc., will also help the confessor. But we must remember that external signs are never absolutely trustworthy, and the confessor should not attach too much importance either to their presence or absence. Some people are so reticent that they would avoid to the utmost the manifestation of external signs of grief, while others are so emotional that they weep on the slightest provocation.

It may be noted here that contrition must exist at least when absolution is given. It would not be sufficient for a penitent to be sorry for a sin, say, the evening after it was committed, and then go to confession a week after without making a further act of contrition. The practical bearing is this—a priest should instruct his people to renew their

contrition immediately before confession, and he ought strongly to condemn the practice of penitents coming into church and at once, or almost at once, going to the priest for confession, even if they have previously prepared their confessions. S. Alphonsus allows that real sorrow may last one or two days and still be sufficient for absolution, but surely the penitent ought to take at least a few minutes in church to collect his thoughts, and to elicit contrition before making his confession.[1]

We may now consider the other side of the question, namely, 'By what signs may a confessor discover when a penitent is lacking in contrition?' Here again exactly the same difficulties present themselves, and no certain indications can be given. The following considerations are, however, submitted: (1) If the priest finds, during the course of the confession, that the penitent is trying to conceal some mortal sin; (2) if the penitent is unwilling to accept a penance which is proportional to his sins; (3) if he is always making excuses and laying the blame for his sins upon others; (4) if he refuses to avoid the occasions of sin; (5) if he confesses grievous sin in a careless and casual manner, and resents necessary questions being put to him—any one of these signs ought to put the confessor on his guard.[2] If he comes to the conclusion that the penitent has not contrition he ought to exert himself to the utmost to produce it. He must cautiously mix gentleness with firmness, and love for the sinner with a hatred of the sin. For instance, if he find that the penitent has tried to hide a mortal sin, he would not at once reprove

[1] cp. S. Alphonsus de Ligorio, *Theologia Moralis*, Lib. v, n. 446. (The edition referred to throughout this book is the 'Editio Recentissima,' Paris, 1872.)

[2] cp. C. Marc, *Institutiones Morales Alphonsianae*, § 1817. (The edition referred to throughout this book is that of 1893.)

him. He would exhort him not to be afraid but to remember that he (the priest) is there to help him and will sympathize with him in his trouble. When the sin has been confessed he will then point out the awfulness of a sacrilegious confession.

It is the custom in many parishes for the priest to remind penitents when it is time for them to come to their confessions. In the case of children, notice is usually given in the Catechism, and wards and guilds serve as an opportunity in the case of adults. Also individual penitents are looked up when they become remiss in their duties. This practice is strongly condemned by some priests, generally on the grounds that the ideal is for penitents to come quite voluntarily, and, moreover, that the system of reminding tends to make penitents mechanical in their duties, and to come simply to please the priest; consequently the danger of their coming with wrong dispositions is increased. From the theoretical point of view there is something to be said for the objection, but, as is so often the case in theoretical arguments, the objections have not nearly so much weight in practice. It may be candidly admitted that the ideal is for penitents to come to confession quite voluntarily; *but what if they do not do so?* Are they to be allowed to lapse without any effort on the part of their spiritual pastor? Surely the priest is just as much within his rights in looking up lapsed penitents as he is in looking up lapsed communicants, or absentees from his Bible Class. As to the *dangers*, we are surrounded by them in every department of our work, and he is a wise priest who recognizes these dangers, and, knowing them, learns how to avoid them.

The author can speak from personal experience with regard to children and poor people, and he

is convinced that the only way to inculcate regularity and order in the reception of the sacraments is by reminding, both in general and in individual cases. He can also state that the evils predicted have not happened, but that, on the contrary, a sound and regular routine has been established, which has been of the greatest benefit to the growth of the spiritual life. These conclusions have also been confirmed by priests using the same methods in parishes consisting of people of higher social standing. It is perhaps superfluous to point out that a certain amount of tact is necessary in dealing with individual cases, but upon many people a gentle hint is entirely wasted, and they need to be told plainly that they are neglecting their religious duties and ought to reform their ways.

CHAPTER II

PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT

May be explicit, or implicit—The characteristics of amendment: sincere, effectual, and universal—How to remedy despair in penitents—Signs of lack of purpose of amendment.

CONTRITION deals with the past, amendment with the future. If a person is truly sorry for the sins he has committed in the past, he can scarcely fail to desire specifically to avoid sin in the future. We recognize that—

> It's not enough to say,
> 'I'm sorry and repent,'
> And then to go on afterwards
> Just as you always went.

Amendment may be either explicit—that is, formal; or implicit—that is, included in contrition. Some moralists (very few) hold that an explicit purpose of amendment is necessary, but the common opinion is that an implicit purpose is sufficient. Considering, however, the importance of purpose of amendment, the priest should always in practice teach his penitents to make an explicit purpose of amendment when they are preparing for their confession.

Whether the purpose of amendment be explicit or implicit, it should possess the following characteristics: it must be (1) sincere, (2) effectual, (3) universal.

1. *It must be sincere.* That is, there must be a true intention to avoid sin; a vague wish would not be sufficient.

2. *It must be effectual.* This means that the penitent must be prepared to take the necessary steps to avoid falling into sin in the future, even if it shall cause him considerable inconvenience, loss, or suffering.

3. *It must be universal.* The penitent must resolve to avoid *all* mortal sins. It will be seen that there is a difference between the universality of contrition and that of purpose of amendment. In the former it extends only to sins which have been committed ; in the latter to all mortal sins it is possible to commit. With regard to venial sins universality of purpose of amendment does not apply ; the penitent, however, should at least purpose to progress in the spiritual life by making a sincere effort to lessen the number of his smaller sins. The reasonableness of this doctrine will be seen when we reflect that, without a special privilege of grace, no one can expect to avoid *all* venial sin, and we are not called upon to promise the impossible.

In practice it is of great importance that the confessor should understand clearly what is expected of the penitent with regard to purpose of amendment. It is not an uncommon occurrence for a penitent, who has fallen frequently into sin after resolving to avoid it, to despair of ever obtaining a complete victory ; consequently he is afraid to renew his purpose to amend, in case he once again breaks his promise. The confessor should explain clearly to him that what is required is that he shall at the present moment (*hic et nunc*) have a firm purpose of amendment ; that he must trust more and more in divine grace and less in himself ; and that he should not anticipate temptation, but daily renew his resolution to amend. The confessor should always deal gently with one inclined to give

up everything in despair. He should try to inflame his heart with the thought of divine love, and encourage him to greater effort. This is not to err on the side of laxity, but to act from a sincere desire to save a soul from falling into a condition of despair.

From this it will be seen that the fact that a penitent relapses into sin after confession is not necessarily a sign that he was wanting in purpose of amendment. This purpose, however, would be wanting if the penitent made no effort at all to overcome his temptations ; with a sincere desire to amend he would, for a time at least, resist the temptations which beset him. If a penitent says definitely that he has given up all hope, and despairs of reforming, it shows that he has lost his faith in God's grace. He should be taught that such despair is sinful, and moved to be sincerely sorry for allowing himself to retain such a sinful thought. He cannot be absolved until he renounces this despair and expresses his belief that God will help him with His grace.

We may conclude this section by quoting the advice given by Cardinal Cajetan to confessors :

'They should not,' he says, 'lead their penitents into temptation by their excessive and imprudent zeal in asking whether they are resolved to avoid sin even at the risk of suffering the greatest misfortunes—loss of goods, of health, of life itself ; for questions of this kind would prove a snare to many penitents. His office should be rather to persuade them to love God above all things, and in consequence of this love to repent of their sins and avoid them for the future. In this way he will inflame the hearts of his penitents, without leading them into danger.'[1]

[1] Quoted from Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, p. 127. The original reference has not been verified.

CHAPTER III

CONFESSION

The qualities of confession—The choice of a confessor—The integrity of confession—Its necessity and extent—The confession of doubtful sins—Those circumstances which alter the species of the sin—The distinction between mortal and venial sin — Aggravating circumstances — Circumstances which change a venial into a mortal sin—Mitigating circumstances.

THE QUALITIES OF CONFESSION [1]

THE priest in the tribunal of Penance acts as a judge, and has to decide if the penitent be worthy of absolution or not ; consequently it is necessary that he should be able to form a correct estimate of the penitent's condition, hence the confession must be *complete*. The integrity of the confession is so important that it will be considered at greater length in a subsequent section. There are other secondary qualities which, while being important, are not all absolutely necessary. They are as follows :

1. *The confession must be simple.* That is, it should not have mixed up with it irrelevant matter. The penitent should be instructed to state clearly and without ambiguity the sins of which he has been guilty. He should strive to be brief and as

[1] The general arrangement of this article, with some additions, is based upon that given in Bishop Webb's excellent little book, *The Cure of Souls*.

straightforward as possible, and to avoid unnecessary repetition of sins.

2. *The confession should be humble.* This follows from contrition. The penitent comes to the tribunal as a sinner humbly asking forgiveness from the God he has offended. So that, unless he be prevented by physical infirmity, the penitent should confess his sins on bended knee.

3. *The confession should be prudent.* That is, it should be so worded that the reputation of others is not made to suffer. It not infrequently happens, particularly amongst the working class, that the greater part of a woman's confession is taken up with the narration of her husband's faults and vice versa. This, of course, should be discouraged ; the penitent is there to confess his own sins, not those of other people. The question as to whether and under what circumstances a penitent should speak about his partner in sin should be studied in more detailed works on Moral Theology. In the confession of sins against the Seventh Commandment it should be remembered that, while the confession must be complete, it should at the same time be modest.

4. *The confession should be sincere.* All ambiguity and dissimulation is to be avoided. A penitent who deliberately words his confession so as to hide the nature of his sins is as bad as one who neglects to make a complete confession. He cannot have real contrition, or he would be willing to make his confession in an open and straightforward manner. Jeremy Taylor says :

> He that confesseth his sins must do it with all sincerity and simplicity of spirit—not to serve ends, or to make religion the minister of design, but to destroy our sin, to shame and punish ourselves, to obtain pardon and institution ; always telling our sad story just as it was in its acting, excepting where the

manner of it, and its nature and circumstances, require a veil; and then the sin must not be concealed, nor yet so represented as to keep the first immodesty alive in him that acted it, or to become a new temptation in him that hears it.[1]

5. *The confession should be vocal.* Under all ordinary circumstances this will hold good. In the case of a dumb person or one with a serious impediment in his speech the confession may be made in writing, the confessor reading the sins written on the paper. After the confession has been made care should be taken to destroy the paper so that the seal may not be broken.

6. *The confession should be secret.* That is, the penitent should not speak any louder than is necessary for the priest to hear him. Under all ordinary circumstances confessions should be heard in the open church; priests cannot be too careful about this. When this is done there can be no room for scandal, as everything is quite open and above board. It seems, however, to the author that an exception may be made in the case of very deaf persons, always provided there is no danger of scandal. In such cases the confessor could arrange to hear them either in a chapel separated from the body of the church, in the vestry, or other suitable place, or he could make a special appointment when the church would be free from worshippers.

7. *The confession should be pure.* That is, in intention. The only worthy object in making one's confession is in order to obtain God's pardon for past sin and sacramental grace. Priests should beware of a particularly objectionable type of mendicant who, in order to obtain alms, asks one to hear his confession, and then follows it up with a long appeal for help.

[1] *Doctrine of Repentance*, x. viii.

8. *The confession should be truthful.* The penitent must neither conceal his sins, nor confess sins which he has never committed. Since penitents almost always realize the gravity of telling lies in confession, the obligation to truthfulness is all the stronger.

9. *The confession should be voluntary.* That is, the penitent ought not to be prevailed upon to confess by threats or promises. This does not mean that he ought not to be urged to make his confession for his soul's health.[1]

10. *The confession should be an accusation.* Penitents who are always making excuses and trying to plead extenuating circumstances show that their contrition is at least weak.

11. *Finally, confession should be frequent.* As we have seen, the strict obligation to confess only applies when the penitent has committed mortal sin. But if there is to be any growth in the spiritual life, and the penitent is to obtain benefit by the 'ghostly counsel and advice' given by his confessor, the sacrament should be approached with frequency and regularity. Confessors should advise their penitents to include in their Rule of Life a regular time for coming to confession. This will, of course, vary according to individual circumstances, and no general rule can be given; personally I would suggest that not more than a month should elapse between each confession.

For the sake of his soul's health the penitent should use discretion in choosing his confessor, and when the choice has been made he should trust himself to the guidance of his director, and go to him only. It is a bad plan for penitents constantly to be changing their confessor, and to be going from priest to priest simply to obtain absolution.

[1] cp. p. 37.

It sometimes happens that a penitent is afraid to go to his regular confessor because he has fallen into some particularly shameful sin. He is, of course, free to make his confession to another priest, and perhaps it is wise for the confessor to be rather lenient in this exceptional case. Holding this view, I would suggest that if a priest finds, when his penitent comes to confession, that he has made his previous confession elsewhere, he should not express any curiosity as to the reason.

THE INTEGRITY OF CONFESSION: ITS NECESSITY AND EXTENT

Moralists draw a distinction between material and formal integrity. A confession is said to be *materially complete* when the penitent confesses all the mortal sins, together with their number, species, and circumstances, which have been committed since baptism and not yet submitted to the power of the keys. It is *formally complete* when the penitent confesses all the sins that he can remember after careful self-examination, and there is nothing lacking through the penitent's own fault. From this it will be seen that material integrity is not always necessary in order that the confession may be valid. A penitent may, even after careful self-examination, honestly forget some mortal sin that he has committed, or he may be in such a physical condition (as in serious illness) that he cannot make a thorough self-examination; in both cases, although material integrity is lacking, the confession would nevertheless be valid. Formal integrity is always necessary. If the penitent wilfully concealed one mortal sin, through shame or other cause, his confession would lack formal integrity and be invalid. When our Lord gave to His Apostles the power of the keys He placed them in

the position of judges, to pronounce the sentence of remission or retention of sins ; but no judge can pass a valid sentence unless he has all the facts of the case before him ; the necessity of the integrity of the confession therefore follows from the institution of the sacrament.[1] Besides passing sentence the priest has to impose a penance proportionate to the sin committed ; this would be impossible if the penitent were at liberty to leave any mortal sin unconfessed. Finally, we may note that not only is the priest in the position of a judge, but also acts as the physician of the soul; the use of the sacrament is not only to heal the wounds caused by sin, but also to prevent lapses into sin. If the priest is to carry out the work of the physician adequately, he must know thoroughly the state of the penitent's soul, and this can only be achieved by the penitent making a complete confession of his sins.

With regard to the *extent* of the integrity of confession, it is important to remember that the number, species, and circumstances which alter the species, should always be confessed. Almost all if not all confessors will call to mind confessions they have heard which convey no real information as to the penitent's spiritual condition. The penitent states in the vaguest manner possible that he has committed certain sins. For the sake of clearness we will manufacture an example : ' I have sinned in thought, word, and deed. I have missed my prayers. I have sinned against the Seventh Commandment. I have been irritable. I have broken the commandments of the Church.' The author is of the opinion that the indiscriminate giving out of printed forms of self-examination, without any clear instruction as to how to use

[1] cp. *Catech. Roman.* Pars ii, cap. v, n. 41.

them, is in a large measure responsible for this kind of confession. When we examine the above example we see the reason why the confession conveys no real information as to the penitent's condition ; it is because the number of the sins, their species, and circumstances are omitted. It is not enough to say, ' I have broken the commandments of the Church ' ; there are several such commandments, and the species, etc., should be mentioned. The penitent would confess correctly by saying, ' I have not abstained from meat on three Fridays, and have broken one fast-day since my last confession through forgetfulness.' So also, ' I have sinned against the Seventh Commandment ' is totally inadequate ; it might mean a passing impure thought, or repeated acts of adultery.

THE CONFESSION OF DOUBTFUL SINS

The object of this section is to give a few general indications to aid confessors in advising penitents whether they should confess doubtful sins or not ; a detailed consideration of the subject may be found in general works on Moral Theology (for example, S. Alphonsus, *Theologia Moralis*, Lib. v, nn. 473 78, or more briefly and clearly in Marc, *Institutiones Morales Alphonsianae*, § 1695). The question conveniently falls under three heads : (i) The case concerning the sin itself, when the penitent doubts whether he has committed the sin. (ii) The case concerning the gravity of the sin, when he doubts whether it is a mortal or venial sin. (iii) The case concerning the confession of the sin, when he knows that he has committed the sin, but doubts whether he has confessed it.

Speaking quite generally, we may say that in the case of doubtful sins, while, ordinarily, there is no *obligation* to confess them, yet the penitent

should mention them in order to quieten his conscience and to assure himself that his confession is complete. He should, of course, confess them as doubtful. The obvious exception to this general rule is the case of scrupulous penitents, who should be discouraged from confessing doubtful sins.

With regard to class ii, ignorant and poorly instructed penitents should always confess when in doubt as to the gravity of the sin, for they are not able, as a rule, to distinguish between mortal and venial sin. To this class belong those doubts which concern the full consent of the will, and in dealing with these the confessor must consider the character of the penitent expressing the doubts. If the penitent has a lax conscience he should be advised always to confess the sin, for the presumption is against him. On the other hand, if the penitent is not in the habit of falling into mortal sin, he is not obliged to confess doubtful sins, and may even be encouraged not to do so, as the presumption is in his favour.[1]

With regard to class iii, the general rule is that if the doubt rests on very slight evidence the sin should be confessed; Roman Catholic moralists, using Probabilism, rule that if there is ' sufficient probability ' that the sin has been confessed, there is no obligation. Scrupulous penitents ought to be clearly instructed that they should not confess sins unless they are quite certain that they have not mentioned them before.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SINS

Since the circumstances which attend the commission of a sin often alter its gravity, etc., it is necessary that the subject should be considered in some detail. They may be classified under the

[1] cp. S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral*, Lib. v, n. 476

following heads: (*a*) Those circumstances which alter the species of the sin. (*b*) Aggravating circumstances. (*c*) Mitigating circumstances.

(*a*) *Those circumstances which alter the species of the sin.* These have been conveniently classified by moralists as follows: (i) Circumstances connected with *place*. The fact that a thing has been stolen from a church adds the sin of sacrilege to the sin of stealing, so the fact must be confessed. (ii) Circumstances connected with *time*. As, for instance, if immediately after receiving Holy Communion some grievous sin is committed, the person is also guilty of sacrilege by so dishonouring the Blessed Sacrament. (iii) Circumstances connected with *the end in view*. This will be made clear by quoting what appears to be the stock example. Suppose a man steals in order to get intoxicated; he must confess the end for which he stole, since it is in itself a mortal sin, and he is guilty of drunkenness as well as theft. (iv) Circumstances connected with *the person with whom the sin is committed*. Thus, if impurity is committed with a relation the species of the sin is changed and it becomes incest; or if impurity is committed with one dedicated to God by vows of chastity, there is an additional sin against the virtue of religion. Also with regard to sins of hatred it has a new species of sinfulness when the object of the hatred is a near relation. (v) Circumstances connected with *the person who commits the sin*. Confession of such circumstances is necessary when the penitent commits the sin of impurity and is at the same time bound by vows of chastity, since there is the double sin of sacrilege and impurity. The same applies when the person is married, for he sins not only against purity, but also against his marriage vows. Parents, teachers, priests, and

employers who by their conduct cause scandal to those in their care incur a special sin against charity.

Since many penitents are not able to judge of the circumstances which change the species of sin, the confessor is quite within his rights in asking for information on this point; in fact, it is most advisable that he should do so.[1] This is specially important with regard to sins contrary to purity; the confessor is the penitent's spiritual physician, and he cannot prescribe a remedy unless he knows the exact nature of the disease. This will be sufficiently obvious without quoting special instances.

(*b*) *Aggravating circumstances*, by which sins in themselves venial become mortal. Perhaps it may be well, before enumerating these circumstances, to consider what is meant by the distinction between venial and mortal sin, a distinction followed by all Catholic moralists, and generally condemned by Protestant and other writers on ethics.[2] Let us appeal, by quotations, to the authority of S. Thomas Aquinas. Under the question, 'Is it proper to divide sin into mortal and venial?' S. Thomas gives the reasons for such a division as follows:

> The principle of the spiritual life, which is a life in accord with virtue, is the order to the last end; and if this order be corrupted, it cannot be repaired by any intrinsic principle, but by the power of God alone, because disorders in things referred to the end, are repaired through the end, even as an error about conclusions can be repaired through the truth of the principles. Hence the defect of order to the last end cannot be repaired through something else as a higher prin-

[1] A popular aid for memorizing the circumstances reads as follows: *Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando.*

[2] A discussion of the objections brought against the distinction between mortal and venial sin will be found in my *Belief and Conduct*, pp. 136–140.

ciple, as neither can an error about principles. Wherefore such sins are called mortal, as being irreparable. On the other hand, sins which imply a disorder in things referred to the end, the order to the end itself being preserved, are reparable. These sins are called venial ; because a sin receives its acquittal (*veniam*) when the debt of punishment is taken away, and this ceases when the sin ceases.[1]

He further states :

The difference between venial and mortal sin is consequent to the diversity of that inordinateness which constitutes the notion of sin. For inordinateness is twofold, one that destroys the principle of order, and another which, without destroying the principle of order, implies inordinateness in the things which follow the principle : thus, in an animal's body, the frame may be so out of order that the vital principle is destroyed ; this is the inordinateness of death ; while, on the other hand, saving the vital principle, there may be disorder in the bodily humours ; and then there is sickness. Now the principle of the entire moral order is the last end, which stands in the same relation to matters of action, as the indemonstrable principle does to matters of speculation (*Ethic.* vii). Therefore when the soul is so disordered by sin as to turn away from its last end, viz. God, to Whom it is united by charity, there is mortal sin ; but when it is disordered without turning away from God, there is venial sin.[2]

One more quotation must be given as bearing upon the subject in hand. It is the answer to the question : ' Do mortal sin and venial sin differ in kind ? '

When the will is directed to a thing that is in itself contrary to charity, whereby man is directed to his last end, the sin is mortal by reason of its object. Consequently it is a mortal sin generically, whether it be contrary to the love of God, e.g. blasphemy, perjury, and the like, or against the love of one's neighbour, e.g. murder, adultery, and suchlike : wherefore such sins are mortal by reason of their genus. Sometimes, however, the sinner's will is directed to a thing containing a certain inordinateness, but which is not contrary to the love

[1] *Summa* I–II, Q. lxxxviii, art. 1.
[2] *Summa* I–II, Q. lxxii, art. 5.

of God and one's neighbour, e.g. an idle word, excessive laughter, and so forth : and such sins are venial by reason of their genus.

Nevertheless, since moral acts derive their character of goodness and malice, not only from their objects, but also from some disposition of the agent, it happens sometimes that a sin which is venial generically by reason of its object, becomes mortal on the part of the agent, either because he fixes his last end therein, or because he directs it to something that is mortal sin in its own genus : for example, if a man direct an idle word to the commission of adultery. In like manner it may happen, on the part of the agent, that a sin generically mortal becomes venial, by reason of the act being imperfect, i.e. not deliberated by reason, which is the proper principle of an evil act, as we have said above in reference to sudden movements of unbelief.[1]

We will now proceed to enumerate those circumstances which may change a venial into a mortal sin. The following are generally given by moralists: (1) When a person commits venial sin through ignorance, supposing it to be mortal, he is guilty of mortal sin. (Why this is so will be seen from the quotations just given from the teaching of S. Thomas on mortal and venial sin.) (2) When a venial sin causes great scandal, this circumstance makes it mortal. For instance, many sins only venial when committed by a layman would be mortal if committed by a cleric or religious owing to the scandal they would cause to the faithful. (3) When a venial sin is committed in order to persuade another person to commit grievous sin it becomes mortal. For example, when a small lie is told to lead a person into grievous sin. (4) A venial sin becomes mortal when it is committed with the definite intention of bringing contempt upon a recognized law, or one's superior. For instance, when a Catholic deliberately eats meat upon an abstinence day to show his contempt for

[1] *Summa* I–II, Q. lxxxviii, art. 2.

the law of the Church.[1] (5) When a person knows that a sin, venial in itself, would be the proximate cause of his committing mortal sin it becomes to him a mortal sin. (6) When a person is so attached to a venial sin that he would continue to commit it if it were mortal, or by reason of his attachment would be willing to commit mortal sin, such a sin is mortal in his case. For example, when a man would have his 'glass of beer,' even if he had to steal to get it.

(*c*) *Mitigating circumstances.* An evil act in order to be mortally sinful must have three conditions: (i) there must be full advertence of the will, (ii) full and free consent of the will, and (iii) the matter or object to which the consent is given must be serious (*materia gravis*). It consequently follows that if any one of these conditions be absent the act will be venial and not mortal. Mortal sin may also become venial when a person, through an erroneous conscience, commits a mortal sin believing it to be only venial.

We have said (i) there must be full advertence of the will; this would be absent if a person were imperfectly conscious of the sinful act, as when half-asleep, and under such circumstances the sin would not be mortal. Also children who have not attained the full use of reason, and persons of weak intellect do not understand the malice of mortal sin, and so cannot be accused of committing it. Again (ii) there must be full and free consent of the will; penitents are often troubled, when they have been tempted to sin, as to whether they have consented to the sin or not. As a general rule we may say that if the sin is a habit and the penitent generally yields to it, the presumption is that he did so in the case in point, and the contrary

[1] cp. *Summa* II–II, Q. clxxxvi, art. 9, ad. 3.

also holds good. Finally (iii) the matter must be serious; certain sins do not admit of parvity of matter, such as blasphemy, hatred of God, perjury, and other sins directed against our duty to God; so, also, sins against the Seventh Commandment do not admit of parvity of matter.[1] There are, however, some sins which, if the matter be light, are venial; of this kind are sins against charity and justice. A single illustration will make this obvious. To steal a penny, or an article of very small value, cannot in common fairness be called a mortal sin robbing us of God's grace and destroying the life of the soul.

[1] For an excellent summary of the question of the classification of mortal sin see Marc, *Instit. Moral.* §§ 335–339.

CHAPTER IV

THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

The degree of diligence required—Consideration of different classes of penitents with regard to this—The use of self-examination papers—Suggested methods of self-examination —Should the confession be written ?

THERE can be no question about the need of examination of conscience ; it is necessary both in order that the penitent may obtain true contrition and also that he may be able to make a good confession of his sins, but we may reasonably inquire what degree of self-examination is expected of the penitent. Adults preparing for their first confession are often dismayed by the prospect of self-examination, and express strong doubts as to their ability to remember all the sins they have committed. Such doubts arise from a wrong conception of the degree of self-examination required in order to make a good confession, and it is of great importance that the priest should explain clearly what is expected of them, thus guarding them from being too lax and careless in their examination of conscience on the one hand, and too scrupulous on the other. Admittedly the making of one's confession is an important enterprise. A prudent man, before entering upon any important business, will give it proper consideration, and in preparing for confession it is expected that the penitent will use such diligence in the examination of his conscience as one would expect

a prudent man to give to any important business. This general rule is approved by all moralists.

The application of this general rule, however, differs with different classes of individuals. Let us consider some specific cases. First there is the poorly educated and illiterate. Such persons have generally great difficulty in examining their conscience, and it is not reasonable to expect that their confessions shall be as full as those of better educated people. If such a penitent comes to confession showing signs of insufficient preparation, he should not be sent away, but the confessor should help him by questions to make a better self-examination. An experienced confessor can be of the greatest help in a case like this, and will produce a better confession in a few minutes than the penitent would accomplish by himself after a considerable time. The reason is that such people have great difficulty in co-ordinating their thoughts and in expressing themselves in a definite manner.

With an educated person, however, the case is different ; his mental standard is such that one has a right to expect him to produce a good confession, and if he comes obviously unprepared he ought to be sent away to make a better preparation. Needless to say, the confessor would do this in the kindest way possible, and would be careful to guard against the danger of the penitent neglecting to return to his confession because of the action taken. It may be mentioned here that persons of great mental capacity, ' very clever people,' as they are usually called, are often inclined to be scrupulous.

Secondly, a person who confesses frequently—that is, every week or fortnight—will have a very good idea of the sins he has committed during this short period, and consequently will not need

to make a very long self-examination, while those who have allowed a considerable time to elapse since their last confession—say six months or a year—will require to examine themselves with greater care in order to make a complete confession. Again, pious persons who seldom, if ever, fall into mortal sin do not, generally speaking, find it difficult to prepare their confessions ; they would always remember a mortal sin if they had committed it. Such penitents use the sacrament as a means of advancement in holiness, and should exercise care in examining themselves with regard to their lesser sins, so that they may make progress in the spiritual life.

Finally, there is the case of persons who are ill. As in the case of illiterates, it is not reasonable to expect that any one distracted by pain or prostrated through weakness should make a very careful examination ; the task is beyond his power. The degree of preparation to be expected will be in proportion to the mental and physical condition of the penitent. In the case of one seriously ill, the confessor should be contented with very little, and if the penitent recovers he should then supply what was wanting in a subsequent confession.

We have an abundant variety of self-examination question forms both contained in manuals of devotion and also published as separate leaflets ; these are intended to aid the penitent in making his examination of conscience. Whilst some of these are quite good, there are others, freely circulated, which are by no means beyond criticism, and their contents show that the compilers have little knowledge of Moral Theology. Sometimes the questions are ambiguous and are used by the penitent, often quite unintentionally, in order to hide his sins. An illustration will make this clear.

A penitent during his confession uses the expression, 'I have given way to passion.' On being asked what kind of passion he means, he replies, 'Sensual passion,' and ultimately the sin of fornication is revealed. Subsequent inquiry during the confession brings to light the fact that the penitent has used a question-paper in which the sentence occurred, and he thought it fitted his case and was a modest and convenient way of expressing his sin! Other questions are either confusing or have little real meaning to the penitent. For instance, children will confess, 'I have done wrong things to please others,' and on being questioned are quite unable to explain what the 'wrong things' are; they have seen the question on the list and have confessed it without attempting to find out what they have really done. They should be examined on the nine ways of participating in sin, which would make the whole matter clear. Some self-examination papers do not distinguish between the obligation of attending Mass on Sundays and the reception of Holy Communion; the penitent will confess, 'I have stayed away from Holy Communion.' This necessitates the confessor asking, 'Do you mean you have missed Mass on Sundays, or did you not make your Communion after your last confession?' a quite unnecessary proceeding if the questions had been properly arranged.

On these grounds one would emphasize the need for parish priests and confessors to examine carefully any self-examination paper they may wish to give to the faithful for their use in preparing for confession, otherwise they may experience constant trouble while hearing confessions. In all cases a definite method should be employed in the examination of conscience, and this method will

vary according to the requirements of the individual. The following methods of self-examination, classified according to different grades of penitents, are offered in the hope that they may prove useful to priests in their instructions.

For a general confession, or the first confession of an adult, the following method is advised : The penitent should be instructed to divide his life into definite periods, and in each period to examine himself by the rule of the Ten Commandments and the Seven Capital Sins. The division of the periods would, of course, differ slightly according to the age, sex, condition, and occupation of the penitent. Two examples are given to illustrate this plan. A doctor of thirty-five years of age is preparing for his first confession. He might conveniently divide his life as follows : Sins committed during childhood, during his school days, during the time he was a medical student, since he qualified to the present time. A middle-aged married lady might be advised to adopt the following divisions : Sins committed during childhood, while at school, from then until marriage, after marriage to the present time. Each division would begin ' During . . . I remember having committed the following sins.' By such a method the confessor is able to obtain a clear idea of his penitent's condition and is saved much unnecessary questioning, which is a relief both to himself and the penitent. The penitent is also saved much confusion of thought, and is not likely to leave out or unintentionally conceal any sin of importance.

For those who have lapsed from confession for some considerable time, it will, generally speaking, be sufficient for them to examine themselves by the rule of the Ten Commandments and the Seven Capital Sins. Such penitents often have difficulty

in estimating the number of times they have committed certain sins ; this may be met by asking if it has been daily, or how often in each week, month, etc.

With regard to those making monthly confessions a very good plan is to instruct them to make their self-examination according to special days. With this idea they would examine themselves as to an ordinary working day with reference to the sins committed at work or at home or during the hours of recreation ; Sundays would be treated separately, the obligation of attending Mass, preparation for, thanksgiving after, and the devout reception of Holy Communion, the Sunday abstinence from servile work, etc., would be considered under this head ; holidays or special occasions, such as weddings and funerals, with their particular temptations, would also receive proper attention under this system.

In the case of those making frequent confessions, i.e. weekly or fortnightly, there will be little difficulty in self-examination ; such persons are generally in the habit of making a daily examination of conscience, and will have a clear idea of the sins they have committed.

The question of the advisability or not of a penitent writing his confession is of some practical importance, more especially as it seems the general custom with us for penitents to use this method. Before entering upon a discussion of the question it is as well to understand clearly that the penitent is absolutely under no obligation to commit his confession to writing, and in the case of scrupulous penitents it is often, if not always, the better way to discourage them from so doing.

Those who support the practice claim that it ensures the confession being a good one ; a peni-

tent is liable to be somewhat confused while making the confession, and if the sins are written down there is no danger of any important sins being forgotten. Also, if the priest has occasion to question during the course of the confession, it can the more easily be resumed when the questioning is concluded. Again, the confession can be made more quickly, and so time is saved, which is an important factor at great festivals, etc., when penitents are numerous. Finally, the penitent is saved much anxiety as to whether he has made a complete confession or not.

Those who oppose the practice rightly say that if the penitent, through confusion or forgetfulness, omits a certain sin or sins, it does not injure the validity of the confession, since the omission is unintentional. They also claim that reading one's sins from a paper tends to make the confession mechanical, and that there is danger of lack of contrition. Moreover, there is always the possibility that the penitent may, through carelessness, lose the paper, and that it may fall into undesirable hands. Finally, a written confession has a tendency to make the penitent scrupulous.

It must be admitted that theoretically the strength of the argument seems to lie with the objectors. All the objections they state might reasonably happen ; but practice shows that they are overrated, and the advantages gained both by the confessor and the penitent more than compensate any disadvantages that may present themselves. This conclusion, one feels certain, will be substantiated if put to the test. It seems best to have no absolutely fixed rule, but to be guided by the character of the individual penitent : some make better confessions when they are written, others can safely and profitably dispense with

writing. It may be pointed out that it is by no means necessary that the sins be written down exactly in the form in which they are to be confessed; all that is required is to make short notes that the penitent himself understands, with a numeral at the side indicating the number of times the sin has been committed.

CHAPTER V

CONCERNING QUESTIONING

On questioning the penitent—Questions should be put at the proper time ; asked with discrimination ; and be prudent and cautious—The use that may be made of information obtained outside the confessional, and from the confession of another.

ONE can hardly overestimate the value of judicious questioning; by this means the confessor can often afford great help to his penitent, obtain a much clearer idea of his spiritual condition, and bring to light sins incompletely confessed or purposely hidden. At the same time it must be recognized that careless questioning may do untold harm, and bring the sacrament into disrepute amongst the faithful. It is never a good plan to ask many questions ; if they have to be put they should be simple and directly to the point. Penitents rightly resent being put under a strict cross-examination. The confessor should, of course, always have some good reason for the questions he asks ; he must never interrogate out of curiosity. The remarks in the *Rituale Romanum* on this point are too valuable to pass over :

If the penitent does not expressly state the number and kinds of his sins, together with those circumstances of which some account is necessary, the priest must prudently question him. He must be careful, however, that he does not unduly occupy any one with curious or useless questions, especially young persons of either sex ; and further, lest the imprudent

questioning of others about matters of which they know nothing become a cause of scandal to them and so an occasion of teaching them sin.[1]

For general guidance the following principles are suggested : (*a*) Questions should be asked at the proper time ; (*b*) they should be put with discrimination ; (*c*) they should be prudent and cautious.

(*a*) *Questions should be put at the proper time.* Do not, unless absolutely necessary, interrupt the penitent while making his confession ; try to bear in mind the points upon which you wish to question, and when the confession is finished take each point in its order. By this means the penitent is not confused, and his confession is more orderly. There is generally no need to inquire as to the penitent's condition (married or single), his occupation, etc., during the course of the confession ; if any sins are mentioned which are affected by these circumstances the priest will be able to obtain the necessary information in the course of his questioning at the conclusion. If, however, the penitent omits to state when he made his last confession it is best to ask at once before he begins relating his sins, for it is of great importance to know this while hearing the confession in order to form a proper estimate of his condition.

(*b*) *They should be asked with discrimination.* Do not bother the penitent with unnecessary and useless questions. If the confession seems satisfactory one may ask as a precaution, ' Is that all you have to confess ? ' On receiving an affirmative reply there is no need for further questioning. If, however, the confession is such that additional examination by question is necessary, the confessor should take into account the age, social position, con-

[1] Tit. iii, cap. 1 de Sacram. Poen. nn. 15–16.

dition, etc., of his penitent ; he will thus avoid many useless questions and spare both himself and his penitent a great amount of trouble. He should have a good knowledge of the particular temptations to which different classes of penitents are exposed, and confine his questions to such matters.

(*c*) *They should be prudent and cautious.* Always question from the general to the particular, from the lesser to the greater, from the common to the uncommon. When a penitent confesses that he has had bitter thoughts against another, the confessor might ask if such thoughts have led him to express his dislike to other people, and so on. The questioning should progress from thoughts to words and deeds, and would, of course, end directly the penitent gives a negative answer to any one of these. Prudence and caution are particularly necessary in the case of children and young people ; we must never arouse their curiosity by questions which may lead them to inquire further into the matter amongst their friends, and so gain a knowledge of sin they did not previously possess. Questions must, of course, always be perfectly modest, and the priest should always restrain and even reprove a penitent who expresses himself with coarseness or lack of modesty.

In dealing with particular sins the confessor will have to question both on the circumstances and the number of times a sin has been committed if the penitent does not mention these in his confession ; this subject has already been fully dealt with. It is important to remember that when certain sins are confessed they often indicate that others may probably be present. For instance, anger often leads to fighting, swearing, etc., and drunkenness to impurity, quarrelling, etc. ; and

the confessor would properly question, say in the case of anger, 'When you were angry did you make use of bad words?' and so on.

We have now to consider, with regard to questioning, a matter of great practical importance, and which presents no little difficulty. The confessor knows that the penitent has committed a certain sin, which, however, he does not mention when he comes to confession. How far is the confessor justified in questioning him on the matter; and if he persists in denying it ought absolution to be refused?[1] The inquiry must be classified according to the source of the confessor's knowledge. Was it obtained outside or inside the confessional? Was it obtained directly or indirectly? We may tabulate three possible cases: (*a*) That in which the confessor has a direct personal knowledge of the sin: he saw it committed. (*b*) That in which he was informed by what he believes to be credible witnesses that the sin was committed. (*c*) That in which he obtained his knowledge while hearing the confession of the accomplice in the sin. We will consider each separately.

(*a*) In this case the procedure is straightforward. The confessor can both question the penitent and, if he refuses to acknowledge the sin, abstain from giving absolution. No priest can give absolution unless he believes the penitent has the proper dispositions, and here the confession is plainly lacking in integrity. If on being questioned the penitent admits that he has committed the sin, the priest would need to point out before giving absolution the grievousness of concealing sins in confession, and it would also be a good opportunity of trying to find out if there have been previous sacrilegious confessions.

[1] cp. S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. v, n. 631

(*b*) Here the matter is more complicated. The confessor may question, but if the penitent denies the sin his word should be taken and absolution given. The person or persons who informed the priest may have been mistaken, or even may have purposely, through malice against the penitent, exaggerated the circumstance. There might be rare occasions on which the priest could not possibly doubt the correctness of the information given him ; in such case he could hardly give absolution.

(*c*) We now come to the most difficult case of all, that in which the confessor obtained his knowledge from the confession of another. In questioning, he must preserve the seal, and before giving absolution he must be satisfied that the penitent has the proper dispositions. If the confessor has obtained the expressed permission of the *complex* to mention the sin, it seems clear that he may make use of this permission, explaining to his penitent that such definite permission has been obtained ; otherwise (in order that the seal may be kept) he can only question in a perfectly general manner. But in the latter case the question arises, Can he give absolution if the penitent does not confess the sin ?

On this point moralists differ. S. Alphonsus seems to me to give a very unsatisfactory solution. He says :

> In my opinion Lacroix (n. 1929) is sounder : he quotes Suarez, Dicastello, and Illsung to the effect that in such a case the priest must on no account give absolution, but must only make use of some form of prayer in order to conceal his refusal of absolution. And Viva *l.c.* supports this opinion in saying that, when the confessor makes a prudent judgement that the penitent is sacrilegiously denying a sin, he ought not to absolve him.[1]

[1] S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. v, n. 631.

What, then, is to be done? Two courses present themselves, either to give absolution conditionally or absolutely, and the latter seems to be the better one to adopt, unless the penitent plainly shows by his behaviour that he is lying. He must be left to God's mercy; the priest can pray for him, and confessors may also console themselves with the thought that one can hardly ever be absolutely certain that a penitent is deliberately making a sacrilegious confession, and that under all circumstances the seal must be preserved.

CHAPTER VI

SATISFACTION

The nature of satisfaction—The imposition of a penance—The amount to be in proportion to the gravity of the sin, and the ability and condition of the penitent—The Penitential Canons of the Church—Public penances—Penances for mortal and venial sin—Circumstances which warrant the imposition of a lighter penance—Cautions to be observed in imposing certain penances—A list of useful penances—Works of piety—Works of mortification—Remedial penances—The penitent is bound to accept and perform the penance—The time when the penance should be performed—The case of a penitent falling into mortal sin before performing the penance—When the penance is forgotten—The commutation of the penance.

SATISFACTION, in the restricted meaning in which we here use the word, is the imposition of a penance by the priest in confession, and its acceptance by the penitent.[1] We have seen [2] that the grace conferred by the sacrament of Penance is the forgiveness of all post-baptismal sin, together with the remission of the whole of the *eternal* punishment due to sin, and at least a part of the *temporal* punishment. Satisfaction deals with the temporal punishment. It is clear that God does not always remit this in full; in His Fatherly correction He punishes sinners, although such chastisement does not represent the full penalty demanded by our sins. The justice of this punishment is recognized under the Jewish dispensation.

[1] For the theology of satisfaction the reader should refer to S. Thomas, *Summa*, Suppl. QQ. x and xii–xv. [2] See p. 7.

When Moses sinned, God forgave him when he repented, but he had to bear his penance, 'Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.' [1] David repented of his sin, and Nathan absolved him: 'The Lord hath put away thy sin'; but the temporal punishment remained: 'The child that is born unto thee shall surely die.' [2] It is in order that the penitent may discharge this temporal punishment that the priest imposes a penance. But satisfaction has an extra-sacramental as well as a sacramental part; since the penance set by the priest does not make full satisfaction for the sins committed, the penitent ought to add of his own free will other works, and to bear patiently the sufferings and tribulations that come to him in this life. The penance, moreover, is medicinal, and as such serves to strengthen the soul weakened by sin.

Since the penance is an integral part of the sacrament, and because the penitent should not lose the benefits of satisfaction, a priest is bound to impose a penance every time he gives absolution. This applies not only to those confessions acknowledging mortal sins, but also to those consisting only of venial sins. In the case of a penitent at the point of death the priest would not sin if he refrained from giving a penance, but in practice he could usually get the sick person to say as a penance some short ejaculation, such as 'Jesus, help and save me.' The penance should be given just before the words of absolution are pronounced; if it were imposed before the confessor gave his advice it might easily be forgotten, and some persons, through shyness, will not ask the priest to repeat the penance. If he forgets to set a penance before giving absolution, the confessor should impose it immediately afterwards. The *amount* of the pen-

[1] Deut. iii. 27. [2] 2 Sam. xii. 14.

ance should be in proportion to the *gravity* of the sin and the *ability* and *condition* of the penitent. That the penance should bear some proportion to the gravity of the sin is not only reasonable, but also in accordance with the common idea of justice. If a penitent confesses only venial sin, the priest would set a light penance, but when mortal sin is present a heavier penance should be given ; it is not, however, generally practicable or advisable to increase the amount of the penance in direct ratio to the gravity of the sin.

It is not only of great interest, but also of considerable benefit, to study the old penitential canons of the Church. Times have, of course, changed, and one would never think of imposing such penances as prescribed in the canons ; but the spirit remains, and they show with what degree of gravity various sins were regarded in earlier times.[1]

In giving the penance the priest should always take into account both the ability and the condition of his penitent ; it would sometimes be most unwise to impose a penance proportionate to the sin committed. We shall deal later with those circumstances which warrant the imposition of a lighter penance than justice demands. We may note here that the confessor should be careful never to give a public penance for secret sin, since by such a course he would be in grave danger of breaking the seal. For open and notorious sin public penance may be imposed, and is often most beneficial in its effect. For instance, suppose a server caused grave scandal by a sin against the Seventh Commandment ; he might, as a penance, be suspended from his duties at the altar for a

[1] A collection of these canons is given in S. Alphonsus, *Theologia Moralis*, Diss. Prol. I. cc. 2–5

certain definite period ; by accepting this he would not only show his contrition, but also the scandal would be removed. In imposing a public penance the priest should, while striving, on the one hand, to overcome the evils of scandal amongst his flock, endeavour, on the other, to be as merciful as possible to the sinner.

Before leaving the subject of the amount of the penance to be imposed, we may consider what kind of penances would be proportionate for mortal and venial sins ; always remembering that, in the case of the former, there are certain circumstances which warrant the imposition of a lighter penance. A confessor would be greatly to blame if he had only one or two penances which he always imposed. It is hoped that the list of useful penances given at the end of this section will be of some help to priests who find difficulty in giving their people suitable penances. In the case of mortal sins the confessor might give as a penance one of the following : The Prayer Book Litany, the Seven Penitential Psalms, the Gospel for Palm Sunday, and the Gospels appointed for Holy Week. For venial sins there is a wide choice. We mention the following : One of the Penitential Psalms, one of the shorter litanies found in books of devotion, the *Magnificat,* Psalm xci as an act of trust in God, the Our Father and Prayer of Humble Access, the Nicene Creed as an act of faith, etc.

We now come to a consideration of those circumstances which warrant the imposition of a lighter penance than justice demands. The confessor should have a thorough knowledge of these, so that he can at once apply them in practice. When the penitent exhibits a great amount of contrition a lighter penance may be imposed. Under such circumstances it is often beneficial to impose a

light penance *sub gravi*, e.g. one of the Penitential Psalms, and a heavier penance *sub levi*, such as to attend Mass two or three times during the week. A penitent showing great contrition would almost invariably be willing to accept a very heavy penance, but it is by no means always advisable to impose one. When there seems reason to suppose that a special advantage may be obtained, such as a more frequent use of the Sacraments, the penitent may be given a lighter penance. He should, however, be told that leniency has been exercised, and that the penance does not represent the gravity of his sin. When the penitent has already made acts of restitution, has avoided the occasions of sin, or taken steps towards reconciliation after a quarrel, the penance may be lessened, for these acts themselves are a penance. If the penitent is weak or sick, he should only be given a light penance.

The confessor is also justified in giving a lighter penance if he has reason to suppose that a heavier penance would not be performed, or if he feels that it would cause the sacrament to become repugnant to the penitent, and so keep him away from it. In such a case the confessor should exercise patience, and gradually build up and strengthen the penitent's spiritual life. We have instances of many of the saints who have themselves performed the penances which they felt their penitents were too weak to endure, and we should do well in following their example.

We have already noticed that a public penance should never be given for a secret sin ; there are other precautions to be observed by the confessor in imposing a penance. Fasting may be imposed by way of mortification, but there are several restrictions to be observed. Children should never be

called upon to fast, nor is it advisable to ask delicate people or those engaged in manual labour to fast as a penance. If the penitent expresses the desire to fast, it is best to suggest that he abstain from some particular food, or give up intoxicating drink for a certain time, or to limit the amount consumed ; he might also be asked to give up certain pleasures. We must remember that modern conditions of life make it very difficult to fast, and consequently great caution must be employed in imposing such a penance.

Still more care is necessary when the penitent wishes to use bodily mortification such as the discipline. Personally I feel that it is, almost without exception, unwise to allow female penitents to use the discipline, and in the case of men I should require the penitent to be of an even and sensible temperament, and should inquire very closely into the motives giving rise to such a desire. When the priest feels that he can permit the use of the discipline he should always regulate carefully how it is to be done ; he should state how many strokes are to be inflicted, and on what days the discipline is to be used. The penitent ought to be warned very strongly against practising this mortification without the advice of his confessor, and told that he must not mention to others that he is using it. The recitation of the *De profundis*, with one stroke of the discipline at the end of each verse, once or twice a week would be a fair use of this mortification.

Praying with the hands extended in the form of a cross (of course in private), rising at a stated time in the morning, praying on bended knees, visiting the sick and poor, are profitable mortifications, and since there is an absence of novelty about them they are of more lasting value than

scourging, etc. Penances repugnant to nature, or which interfere with the penitent's daily routine in the world, should never be given, and, in the case of children, confessors should be careful not to impose penances likely to be objected to by their parents, or of such a nature as to cause comment. The confessor should avoid setting complicated penances hard to remember, such as four or five different prayers ; hence the importance of having a good knowledge of the different kinds of penances which may be imposed. Finally, penances should not be given which extend over a long period of time, as it is very improbable that the penitent would perform them.

A LIST OF USEFUL PENANCES[1]

We may conveniently classify penances under three heads : (*a*) Works of piety ; (*b*) works of mortification ; (*c*) remedial penances. The particular application of these must be left to the judgement of the confessor.

(*a*) *Works of piety.* (i) Vocal prayers: In dealing with illiterate people the priest should be careful to give such vocal prayers as the penitent knows by heart, and in the case of those who read with difficulty he should remember the fact when imposing prayers they have not memorized. The following are suitable : So many Our Fathers or Hail Marys, the Creed, the *Magnificat,* to say daily a certain number of short prayers (for example, three Our Fathers morning and evening)

[1] A certain amount of repetition is here inevitable, but it is thought that it is best to have a complete and classified list for the purpose of handy reference. I am indebted to Bishop Webb's *Cure of Souls* for the general arrangement of what follows, but a comparison will show that I have allowed myself considerable liberty.

to practise ejaculatory prayer—explaining carefully to illiterate people what this means—to make acts of faith, hope, and charity, also the *Anima Christi* and the Divine Praises may be given if known by heart. For educated people the Prayer Book Litany (either the whole or as far as the Our Father, according to circumstances), any of the litanies found in books of devotion, one of the metrical litanies in the hymn book in use, the Penitential Psalms, the *Veni Creator*, and suitable hymns, psalms, and collects may be used. (ii) Mental prayer as a penance is very useful for educated people; the capacity of the penitent should be taken into account before imposing it. Ignorant people may be told to meditate before a crucifix upon the sufferings of our Blessed Lord. (iii) To hear Mass once or more each week, to be present at the offices of the Church, to hear sermons, are suitable works of piety that may be given as a penance. (iv) Spiritual reading, such as the *Imitation of Christ*, may be imposed as a penance. The confessor should state definitely what is to be read, and how much time each day or week is to be devoted to such reading. (v) To visit the Blessed Sacrament so often and for so long is a good penance, if it is the custom to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the church. The penitent may also be advised to receive Holy Communion on certain fixed days.

(*b*) *Works of mortification.* These have already been considered, and the caution required in imposing them should be remembered. They are: (i) Fasting, either partial or entire; (ii) the use of the discipline; (iii) abstinence from amusement, intoxicating drink, tobacco, etc.; (iv) visiting the poor and sick; (v) rising early; (vi) to pray with arms extended, on bended knee, etc.

(*c*) *Remedial penances.* The object of these is to counteract some particular sin or failing in the penitent. When imposing the contrary virtue as a penance the confessor should be reasonably sure that the penitent will carry it out ; otherwise it seems best to give another penance *sub gravi*, and to impose the opposite virtue *sub levi*. (i) For neglect of prayer and want of recollection, the priest may impose one of the penances given under the head of vocal prayer, to be said so often and to be repeated if said without recollection. (ii) For a lack of the realization of the Presence of God, ejaculatory prayers are of great value. (iii) For lack of faith, attendance at Mass and more frequent communion may be advised. (iv) For blasphemy and mocking at religion, outward signs of reverence, making the sign of the cross, etc., might be imposed. (v) For worldliness and excessive love of pleasure, a definite clause should be included in the Rule of Life restricting amusements, etc. ; any lapse from it to be mentioned in confession. Meditation on the end of man, the vanity of worldly things, and spiritual reading such as the *Imitation* may also be profitably advised. (vi) For anger, the penitent might be told to make an act of contrition as soon as ever possible after committing the sin. For hatred, he should be instructed to pray for the person he has hated. (vii) For sins contrary to holy purity, the confessor may impose one or more of the works of mortification, meditation on the spotless purity of our Blessed Lord and His Virgin Mother may also be advised ; frequent confession and communion is of great help in overcoming the *vitium pollutionis*. (viii) To counteract the sin of greed the penitent should have a definite rule with regard to almsgiving. (ix) Pride may be combated by meditation

on our Lord's humility, by imitating His divine example in visiting the poor and sick, and by offering up to Him the vexations and crosses of our daily life. (x) Gluttony requires works of mortification such as restriction in food and drink, or sometimes in the latter case total abstinence for a definite period. (xi) For sloth it is profitable to advise a definite rule with regard to the employment of time, rising in the morning, and, what is quite as important, retiring at night, and to make a rule never to be ' doing nothing.'

As the confessor is bound to impose a penance, so also the penitent is obliged to accept and perform it. If a severe penance is imposed which the penitent feels he will be unable to perform, he should *at once state his reasons* to the confessor, who will, if they appear to him valid, set a lighter penance. Priests should teach their people that a heavy penance imposed for grave sins binds *sub gravi* ; a penance given for venial sin binds only *sub levi*.

The penitent is not only bound to perform the penance, but also to perform it within a specified time, if the confessor specifies such a time. Priests should remember this in giving penances. For instance, a penance given in this form, ' When you return to your seat say as your penance the Fifty-first Psalm,' ought to be performed by the penitent before leaving the church ; consequently the confessor should not stipulate such a condition when giving a heavy penance unless he is sure that the penitent has time to perform it. When no time is specified the penitent should perform his penance within a reasonable period. He should not delay so long as to be in danger of forgetting it.

Roman Catholic moralists teach that a penitent must be in a state of grace when he performs his

penance in order to obtain its sacramental effect. If the penitent falls into sin before performing his penance he may still do it, but he does not receive the sacramental effect. They dispute the question, 'When a penance has been performed in a state of mortal sin will its sacramental effect be restored when the penitent is once more in a state of grace?' Many answer in the affirmative; their conclusion is based on the teaching that a sacrament validly administered revives when obstacles present at its reception, which prevented the operation of the sacramental grace, are removed.

What is a penitent to do who has forgotten his penance? If he can easily inform the confessor that he has forgotten it he should do so, but if not—since he is not obliged to repeat his confession, and cannot set himself a penance—he is excused.[1] But he would do well to offer to God some voluntary penance, such as Psalm li.

A penitent may not, on his own authority, substitute another penance in place of that given him by his confessor. If, however, he finds his penance is too severe, and he has good reasons to advance for its commutation, he should apply to his own confessor; or, if he is unable to see him, he can appeal to another priest for a commutation of the penance. We will consider the two cases. The penance can only be commuted in confession. In the case of the same confessor the penance could be commuted immediately after absolution had been given, for it would then be considered as one moral act with the confession: if, however, some time had elapsed, the confessor would hear the penitent's confession and commute the previous penance if he judged it advisable. When the penitent goes to another priest the previous confession need

[1] cp. S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. v, n. 520.

not be repeated, but the penitent should tell him what the penance was, and the reasons that have led him to apply for its commutation. As already stated, this application must be made in confession, otherwise the new confessor would have no jurisdiction over the penitent.

CHAPTER VII

ON GENERAL CONFESSIONS

When they are necessary, useful, or harmful—How to hear a general confession.

BY a general confession we mean the repetition of previous confessions, or the sins of a whole lifetime. Such a confession may be either necessary, useful, or harmful.

A general confession is *necessary* for all those who have made invalid or sacrilegious confessions, and a priest would at once advise that a general confession, extending over the time, should be made in order that the wrong may be remedied. Parochial missions, held at certain intervals, are now fairly common, and they afford an excellent opportunity for correcting sacrilegious confessions. At such a time the conscience is awakened and a sincere desire is manifested to start a new life ; it is therefore of the utmost importance that missioners should emphasize the great evil of bad confessions, and exhort any who have been guilty of the offence to be brave and at once to put themselves right with God. Since many penitents would feel the greatest inconvenience in acknowledging to their own parish priest that their previous confessions had been sacrilegious, it is always a good thing for the incumbent to refrain entirely from hearing confessions at his usual times during a mission. The reason for this is that some peni-

tents, if they saw him sitting in his confessional, might feel that he would expect them to go to him, and consequently the evil would still continue. Priests who have had experience in conducting missions will, I feel sure, agree with this view. In many parishes it is the custom to hold a mission service one night in each week during Lent, this being conducted by a priest from another parish ; this also provides an opportunity for rectifying bad confessions, and for reclaiming lapsed penitents. It is a good plan to arrange for the missioner to be in church for confessions at certain times during Passion Week or Holy Week. These remarks are not intended to infer that sacrilegious confessions are frequent amongst our people, but they are justified even if only one bad confession is brought to light.

There are several occasions when a general confession is *useful*, amongst which we may note the following : It is useful when a person is entering upon a new state of life ; a priest might very properly advise a penitent to make a general confession before marriage ; also a soldier going on active service would receive great spiritual consolation by making a general confession and devout communion before proceeding to the Front. Persons who are in danger of death, if their condition will allow, will also benefit by a general confession, and obtain that spiritual peace which is so valuable to a sufferer. One who is about to receive Holy Order, or to be professed in a religious community, should not fail to make a general confession. It is also useful for those who have reasonable cause to fear that their previous confessions have been lacking in integrity. This does not necessarily mean that they are at all scrupulous ; it sometimes happens that they have originally been only imper-

fectly instructed, and now find that their confessions were not so complete as they should have been; by making a general confession their minds are relieved, and they can hardly fail to benefit in consequence. General confession is to be recommended for those who express a strong desire to begin a new and better life; it gives them deeper sorrow for their past sins, and strengthens them in their resolution of amendment for the future.

It is useful for adults who have not previously made a general confession. They should not, however, be allowed to repeat this general confession unless there are weighty reasons for so doing. Lastly, it is very useful at the time of a parochial mission or the annual retreat.

All spiritual writers are agreed on the great benefits to be derived from making a general confession; it gives us a greater sense of our own sinfulness and consequently deepens our humility, it increases our hatred of sin and strengthens our resolution of amendment, it makes us realize the great goodness of God and so increases our love for Him, and it makes us understand the malice of the sins we have committed. The custom of making a general confession of all the sins committed during the past year at the annual retreat is much to be commended.

A general confession is *harmful* to scrupulous penitents and those who have sinned habitually against the Seventh Commandment. The former do not obtain the peace of mind they seek, but, on the contrary, more scruples are generated; while the latter are in danger of returning to their sin by calling to mind the past occasions of its commission. Both of these should therefore be discouraged from making a general confession.

HOW TO HEAR A GENERAL CONFESSION

When a penitent expresses his desire to make a general confession the priest, having satisfied himself that the reason given is a valid one, should if possible make a special appointment. By doing this he will be able to hear the confession without undue haste, or the feeling that he is keeping others waiting. Young priests with little experience as confessors should not undertake general confessions unless it is absolutely necessary, but should arrange for the penitent to go to a priest with wider experience.

The general attitude of the confessor during the hearing of the confession should be one of true sympathy and kindness. He will try to put the penitent at his ease as much as possible, and will endeavour to give him all the help he can. This is particularly necessary in the case of general confessions made because previous ones have been sacrilegious. He should be on his guard against any outward expression of annoyance, impatience, fatigue, or disgust, and if the penitent halts in his confession, finding it difficult to continue through shame, the priest should aid him with words of encouragement and sympathy.

The question of the *number* of the sins is always a difficulty in this class of confession. The confessor should, if possible, get the exact number of times a particular sin has been committed ; if he cannot do this he should suggest numbers, in order to come as near as possible to the exact number. In the case of habitual sins he would ask how often each month, week, or day they had been committed ; he should aim at suggesting a larger rather than a smaller number, so that the penitent may be spared as much inconvenience as possible. It

is necessary that the confessor should give his whole attention to the recital of the sins, trying to retain in his mind each particular class of sin and its proportion to the whole confession, his object being to get a clear idea of the penitent's condition, so that he may give advice that will be a real help to the sinner.

If at the end of the confession the priest feels that he has not got at the root of the matter, and does not properly understand the penitent's spiritual condition and difficulties, he might inquire what he considers are his besetting sins and those he finds most difficulty in overcoming. He would then give clear and definite advice as to how these may be conquered. He should also ask if the penitent has a definite Rule of Life which he tries to observe, and if there is no such rule he would help the penitent to make one.

PART III

THE SEAL OF CONFESSION

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE AND OBLIGATION OF THE SEAL

Definition of the seal—It binds by natural, divine, and ecclesiastical law—Canon 113 of 1603, and visitation articles—The penitent may give the confessor permission to speak of things heard in confession—Regulations with regard to this.

THE seal of confession (*sigillum confessionis*) is the obligation imposed upon the priest to keep secret everything made known to him in sacramental confession. This obligation binds by natural, divine, and ecclesiastical law, and admits of no exception.

It is of the utmost importance that we should recognize the absolutely binding nature of the seal; justice, religion, and charity demand it. The penitent lays bare his most secret sins to the confessor, and he must have full assurance that such confidence will be respected. This obligation holds even after the death of the penitent. It is recognized by medical and legal practitioners that a professional secrecy must be observed, and that the affairs of the client are not to be discussed with outsiders; still more is absolute secrecy necessary with regard to the confessional. If, for a moment, the idea could be entertained that the confessor might make use of any information he received in confession, or mention even the smallest sin confessed to him, the usefulness, sanctity, and benefits of the sacrament would be rendered absolutely null and void.

Priests should constantly emphasize, both in sermons and in instructions upon confession, the absolute integrity of the seal, and tell their people that under no circumstances (even if his life were endangered by it) would the priest ever mention the sins told him in confession. Penitents have stated that they object to making their confessions to married priests on the ground that they might mention sins in the intimacy of their homes. Such an objection shows a deplorable lack of knowledge regarding the nature of the seal on the part of the penitent, and consequently the need of teaching most emphatically on the subject. It may also serve as a warning to priests, and indicate their great responsibilities in the matter.

There is no direct obligation mentioned in Holy Scripture with regard to the inviolability of the seal; but it arises naturally out of the divine institution of the sacrament of Penance.[1] It is sufficient to observe here that the Fourth Lateran Council (A.D. 1215), after stating that the duty of the confessor to keep the seal has existed in the constant tradition of the Church, forbids any priest, under heavy penalties, ever to betray, 'by word, sign, or in any way,' what he has learned in sacramental confession. In England the 113th canon of the Canons of 1603 deals with the subject of the seal:

> If any man confess his secret and hidden sins to the Minister . . . we do straightly charge and admonish him, that he do not at any time reveal and make known to any person whatsoever any crime or offence so committed to his trust and secrecy (except they be such crimes as by the laws of this realm his own life may be called into question for concealing the same), under pain of irregularity.

The phrase 'except they be such crimes as by

[1] A full discussion of the development of the ecclesiastical law in relation to the *sigillum* will be found in Bertrand Kurtscheid, *A History of the Seal of Confession.*

the laws of this realm his own life may be called into question for concealing the same' calls for further consideration, in view of what has already been said regarding the inviolability of the seal. When we look at Canon 113 as a whole, it is obvious that it is drawn up solely in the interests of the person making the confession, and not in that of the priest who receives it.[1] Thus it follows that, whatever the apparent exception may mean, it most certainly does not mean that the priest is compelled to reveal any and every crime which might be a danger to the community. When the words are taken in their plain sense, all that is allowed is that the priest may, if he feels he must, reveal a crime confessed to him, the concealment of which would put him in danger of his life by the laws of the realm. No other crime must in any circumstances be revealed.

I have made careful inquiries from a legal authority and I am assured that there is no law in England which makes the mere concealment of a crime an offence punishable with forfeiture of life; and Mr. R. S. Nolan, a Roman Catholic jurist, goes further, and says that it does not appear that any such crime has ever existed, even with regard to the crime of treason.[2] Nor, we may add, is there any known case where a cleric has claimed the alleged privilege.

On these grounds, I think, we are driven to the inevitable conclusion that the exception is quite meaningless. It was probably introduced because of the excessive caution of the compilers of the canon, and without any specific case or cases in mind. At this period it was the fashion to qualify

[1] cp. Blunt and Phillimore, *The Book of Church Law*, 11th ed., p. 176.

[2] *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. xiii, p. 656

almost every statement, and this seems to be an unfortunate following of the general custom. Whatever view we may take of the matter, it is certainly beyond all dispute that, if we read the caveat in its plain sense, there is no specific occasion upon which it can now be used. The teaching of the inviolability of the seal in the English Church is identical with that which holds in the Roman communion.

The seventeenth-century bishops made frequent inquiries in their visitation articles both with regard to the opportunities offered by the parish priest for confession, and also concerning the keeping of the seal. Thus Bishop Montague (A.D. 1638) asks :

> Doth the minister exhort his parishioners to make confession of their sins to himself, or to some other learned, grave, and discreet minister, especially in Lent, against the holy Time of Easter, that they may receive comfort and absolution, and so become worthy receivers of such sacred mysteries ?

Bishop Overall (A.D. 1619) has the following question in his visitation articles :

> And if any man confess his secret and hidden sins, being sick or whole, to the minister, for the unburdening of his conscience, and receiving such spiritual consolation, doth or hath the said minister at any time, revealed and made known to any person, whomsoever, any crime or offence so committed to his trust, contrary to the 113th canon ?

We may also quote the Articles of Inquiry in the Archdeaconry of the East Riding of York :

> 27. And if any man at that or any other time, being sick or whole, useth to confess his secret and hidden sins to the priest, for the unburdening of his conscience and for the receiving of spiritual consolation and ease of mind by him, doth the said priest reveal, or hath he at any time revealed and made known unto any person whatsoever, any crime or offence so committed to his trust and secrecy, contrary to the 113th canon of our Church ? [1]

[1] *Cosin's Works*, ii. 11

Now that the use of confession is so prevalent amongst us, one may trust that before long the bishops will revive this custom of their predecessors when issuing their visitation articles.

The penitent may give his confessor permission to mention outside confession things he has heard in the tribunal. S. Alphonsus gives admirable teaching on the subject. He lays down the following rules: The permission must be definitely expressed in words, the priest must not take it for granted; if, however, the penitent begins to speak to the confessor about something said in confession this fact in itself would show that he gave the necessary permission. It must be free and spontaneous; that is, the confessor must not extort permission by threats or repeated requests. The penitent is always quite free to withdraw the permission he has previously granted. The confessor should use the permission given him with discretion, and be careful not to exceed the limits laid down by the penitent.[1]

The confessor should be careful not to allow any one to question him with regard to the sins of his penitents. If such questions are asked he can almost always put a stop to them by saying at once, 'You must not ask such questions.' The confessor as a man does not know what has been told him as a priest. The information received in confession is, as it were, locked in a mental safe, not to be opened except in the confessional; consequently he can only speak from ordinary knowledge when questioned about a penitent, and may deny without the smallest sin what he knows only through confession.

[1] S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. v, n. 651.

CHAPTER II

THE SUBJECT AND OBJECT OF THE SEAL OF CONFESSION[1]

Persons, other than the confessor, who are bound by the seal—The object of the seal—How the seal may be violated, directly and indirectly—How far a confessor may use knowledge obtained in the confessional—Cases in which there is no violation of the seal.

NOT only is the priest who hears the confession bound by the seal, but also all persons who have, either lawfully or unlawfully, obtained knowledge that comes under the seal. From this it follows that if confession is made through an interpreter, he would be bound by the seal. To listen purposely to a person making his confession is in itself a violation of the seal, and anything heard either deliberately or accidentally comes under the seal. If the penitent has written his confession, and leaves it in the confessional, it comes under the seal. The penitent himself is not bound to refrain from speaking about what the confessor has said to him, but he is bound by a natural secrecy with regard to anything which, if made known, might harm the sacrament or the confessor.

[1] To avoid frequent references it is here stated that the following authorities have been consulted with regard to the opinions expressed in this chapter: S. Alphonsus, Lehmkuhl, Marc, and Schieler-Heuser.

All sins committed by the penitent, whether mortal or venial, are objects of the seal; so also are those of his accomplice, and consequently cannot be revealed without the seal being violated. The circumstances of the sins also come under the seal, whatever their nature may be; for instance, if a penitent confessed that he hated his brother because he knew he was a thief, the brother's theft would be an object of the seal. The penance imposed must not be mentioned out of confession. The natural defects of a penitent, such as stupidity, are objects of the seal in so far as they are known only by way of confession; those defects which are generally known do not come under the seal. The position in life and the circumstances of the penitent may be objects of the seal; for instance, if he is incognito, or if the mention of his position or circumstances would lead any one to infer that he had sinned against the particular duties of his position. The special temptations of a penitent, mentioned by him to the confessor when he is in doubt whether he has yielded to them or not, or for advice how to meet them, are objects of the seal. The scrupulosity of the penitent generally comes under the seal, and the confessor should guard against saying, 'Such a person is very scrupulous,' if he only knows the fact through confession.

The virtues of the penitent are not *per se* objects of the seal, but they become so if they are mentioned in relation to some particular sin. Sins committed in the confession itself, such as rudeness and impatience, are not *per se* objects of the seal, because the penitent does not confess them; they should not, however, be mentioned, as a knowledge of them might easily lead to an indirect violation of the seal.

WAYS IN WHICH THE SEAL MAY BE VIOLATED

The seal may be violated either directly or indirectly. It is directly violated when anything coming under the seal is openly and expressly made known and the particular penitent indicated. It is indirectly violated when anything coming under the seal is disclosed which may involve risk of discovery of the penitent.

The confessor may indirectly violate the seal *by word* as follows: (*a*) By speaking in a loud voice to the penitent while he is making his confession so that others may hear what he says. (*b*) By saying that he has denied the penitent absolution, or that he has not yet absolved him, or that he has imposed a heavy penance. (*c*) By speaking of sins heard in confession in such a way that the identity of the penitent may be inferred from what he has said. (*d*) By warning the parents or superiors of penitents to take certain precautions, such a warning being the result of sins heard in confession. (*e*) By two confessors who have shriven the same penitent talking together about his sins. (*f*) By stating, after hearing only a few confessions, that such a sin has been confessed; for suspicion might easily fall upon some particular penitent. (*g*) By mentioning that a certain penitent has not confessed a particular sin, for by this it might be inferred that the penitent has made a sacrilegious confession. To take an extreme case: if it were said to the confessor: 'Mr. A. takes far too much drink,' and he replied, 'I do not think so; he does not confess it.' (*h*) By speaking to a penitent outside confession about his sins, not having the penitent's permission to do so. (*i*) By speaking of sins heard outside confession, but adding some

circumstance heard in confession to support his statement.

The confessor may violate the seal *by deed* as follows : (*a*) By a change of conduct towards the penitent after confession, thus showing displeasure or that he thinks less favourably of him than before. (*b*) By refusing to hear a penitent's confession because of certain facts mentioned in a previous confession.

It is difficult to determine how far a priest is justified in denouncing in sermons vices which he knows, from hearing the confessions of his people, are prevalent in the parish or district. It is generally agreed that there is no violation of the seal if the parish is of some considerable size, or if the vices are public. In all cases the priest should weigh the matter carefully before taking action, and guard against any possibility of the sacrament being brought into disrepute. The matter is still more difficult in the case of the confessor of a convent ; he would certainly be on the safe side in denouncing sins or omissions which usually occur or may occur in all convents, and would not break the seal in so doing, even when he had specific cases in his own convent.

The confessor does not break the seal if he says such a person has made his confession, provided that the person has not made his confession under a condition of secrecy.[1] The seal is not broken if the confessor speaks to the penitent about his sins immediately after giving absolution, since the advice given under such circumstances constitutes one moral act with the confession. Neither is the seal broken when the priest speaks in confession

[1] And in this case, probably, he would be bound only under a natural secrecy ; which secrecy, of course, he could not honourably break.

of sins mentioned in a previous confession, although he should not do so without reason. The priest may also make use of what he has heard in confession in order to pray for the penitent, or to consult books and authorities on a difficult point of theology.

PART IV

THE DUTIES OF THE CONFESSOR IN THE TRIBUNAL OF PENANCE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

The confessor has a fourfold office : that of spiritual father, director of souls, spiritual physician, and spiritual judge.

'COME unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' was the promise of our divine Master ; and as His Father sent Him with this message of comfort, so He sent His disciples. How important, then, are the duties of the priest in the confessional ! In this sacrament, more than in any other part of his ministerial work, the confessor comes into the closest contact with souls. His spiritual children, weighed down by the burden of their sins, come to him—as Christ's representative—to obtain that relief and comfort necessary for their spiritual well-being. The priest is the minister of the sacrament of reconciliation, and as such must realize the great responsibilities of his office. His people have the right to demand what Christ has promised them, and the priest must qualify himself to satisfy that demand ; otherwise he is not fulfilling the obligations of his high calling.

In the sacrament of Penance the priest has a fourfold office. His penitents are to him his spiritual children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and he will exercise towards them the love and mercy which our heavenly Father bestows upon His children. He is also the director of their souls, and must be qualified to

advise them on those matters in which they need his help and direction. He is their spiritual physician : they come to him with wounds to heal, and he must know what spiritual remedies to apply. Finally, he is a spiritual judge ; he must see that justice is dispensed without fear or favour.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFESSOR AS A SPIRITUAL FATHER

Our Lord will be the priest's example—A high moral standard necessary for confessors—The abuses of 'organization'—The confessor should have a great love for souls—Errors to be avoided—The cultivation of the virtue of prudence necessary—Precautions to be observed in hearing the confessions of women.

OUR Blessed Lord Himself will be the example the priest will strive to follow in his relationship of Father to his penitents. While hating sin as the means of separating souls from God, he will always remember Christ's tender treatment of repentant sinners. Following his Master, he will, when the need arises, rebuke vice boldly and without hesitation, or pour the oil of mercy and comfort into the wounds caused by sin. Like Jesus Himself, he will be no respecter of persons; the rich and poor, the noble and the peasant, the pious and the reprobate, the child and the adult, will all receive the same patient and thorough treatment at his hands. He will give of his best, no matter who his penitent may be.

From this it will be seen that a high personal moral standard is required of the priest who has the direction of souls. He should, of course, be free from habitual mortal sin, and himself make frequent use of the sacrament of Penance. He should always prepare himself by prayer and

invocation of the Holy Spirit before administering the sacrament, and when he has finished hearing confessions he should offer his work to God. The power of personal holiness is exercised more in the confessional than anywhere else ; he who is effectively to lead people to God must himself be close to Him. A penitent who knows that his confessor not only preaches but also practises the divine Life is wonderfully stimulated by contact with such a holy man. We need, then, constantly to bear in mind the obligations of our priestly life. In order to do this, frequent meditation on our priesthood, and in particular on the exalted duties of offering the Holy Sacrifice and reconciling sinners to God, should be our special practice. If we strive always to remember that we are called to spend and be spent in God's service, and in that alone, our personal devotion will grow and expand, and its influence will speedily be transmitted to those under our spiritual guidance.

No apology is offered for thus strongly emphasizing the need of real spirituality, because none is needed. One frequently sees the advertisement in Church papers, ' Priest wanted ; good with men and boys.' An interview is arranged ; the candidate is carefully questioned upon his athletic abilities, his experience in organizing Church Lads' Brigades, Boy Scouts, cricket and football clubs, etc. This is what is meant by ' good with men and boys ' ! Surely we need to have a better sense of proportion with regard to a priest's work. Clubs and suchlike organizations are undoubtedly useful, and are often valuable means to a good end, but they are of quite secondary importance. The first qualification a priest must have if he is to be ' good with men and boys,' or any other class of individuals, is a life of personal holiness ; he must

realize his priesthood. If we wish to ascertain his qualifications, our questions should rather be on these lines : ' Do you say your daily Mass, your Offices, and make your meditation ? ' ' Do you read your Moral Theology diligently, and what experience have you had in hearing confessions ? ' ' Have you a sincere love for souls, and are you prepared to visit and minister to the sick at any hour of the day or night ? ' In many cases it is not the young curate's fault that he knows no Moral Theology and is careless about his priestly duties ; the sin must be laid at the door of his vicar, who makes an idol of organization, and considers a boys' club to be of more importance than the bringing of boys to confession.

A great love for souls is another essential element in the character of a good confessor. This virtue can hardly fail to be present if he models his life upon that of the Master ; his heart will be full of love for sinners, as is the Sacred Heart of Jesus. A lack of the virtue of charity is one of the first signs of laxity in a priest. This is well brought out by Manning in his *Eternal Priesthood.* He says :

> The chief signs of laxity are to live without a rule of life ; to say the Holy Mass by custom, with little preparation, and little thanksgiving ; to be weary of the confessional ; to escape it when possible ; to be unpunctual and irregular in attendance. Such a priest soon finds himself more at ease in the world than amongst priests. The habits, tone, talk, and pleasant ways of the world are more to his taste. He lives in a mission-house or a presbytery, but it is not his home. His home is where his heart is, and his heart is in the world. He is ready for any recreation among people of the world or among women, but not always ready for a sick-bed, or a sorrowful tale, or for the Divine Office. In laughter he is unchastened, and in sorrow he is cast down. In prudence and circumspection he is unwary, and often blind to what all about him see, but he alone cannot or will not perceive. He is fond of money, and glad when oblations and gifts come in.

He can give any length of time to the world, and can always find leisure for what he likes. He is a ready talker, and has a turn for satire. He sees the ludicrous in men and things, and is an amusing companion much sought after. . . . A blot upon a layman's coat is hardly seen, but a spot upon a priest's alb is an eyesore to all men.[1]

A priest who possesses this great love for souls will be able to avoid many errors into which he might otherwise fall. (i) The greater the sinner, the more will he strive to draw him back to God. He will realize how much mental anguish the shameful confession has cost the penitent, and he will spare no effort to lead him away from all affection for his sin, and to inculcate the truth of God's boundless mercy, and the power of sacramental grace. How often penitents have returned to their sins because the confessor could not or would not give them that help and sympathy they so much desired in their time of need!

(ii) Children will receive proper care and attention at his hands, for he will remember the words of Christ, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.' The subject of children's confessions is dealt with in detail later on,[2] but we may point out here that in importance it is in no way secondary to the confessions of adults.

(iii) He will treat each individual case on its own merits, and will not be influenced by the social position, birth, or wealth of his penitent.

(iv) He will always be ready to make special appointments for his penitents when necessary, even at personal inconvenience; nor will he show undue impatience if penitents come late or take up a great amount of his time. It is a great temptation to a busy priest to avoid special appointments,

[1] *The Eternal Priesthood*, chapter vi. [2] pp. 213–24.

and when he has heard several confessions, and is just leaving the church, he is easily annoyed by a penitent coming in at the last moment. It is very dangerous, nevertheless, to refuse to hear the confession; he may have justice on his side, but charity always demands self-denial and inconvenience. A gentle and kindly reprimand, without any exhibition of irritation, will generally show the penitent how inconsiderate he has been, and the offence will not be repeated.

(v) The priest who is filled with the virtue of charity will be very painstaking with poor and illiterate penitents. A great amount of patience is often required with these. They make their confession badly, come ill-prepared, or, through stupidity, fail to understand the questions put to them. Such penitents should not be rebuked. In most cases it is not their own fault, and the confessor should question them judiciously, and strive to obtain all the properties of a good confession. It is a work for Christ which will bring its own reward.

(vi) In his love for souls the priest will always take special care to be punctual in his times appointed for hearing confessions; if penitents find him unreliable they will most certainly become irregular in their duties. We must remember that they have calls upon their time as well as ourselves, and if they are kept waiting a long time in church it is too much to expect that they will make frequent confessions. Before great festivals, when there are many penitents, the priest should offer a large choice of times each day during the preceding week, in order that long waiting may be avoided.

(vii) Finally, the good confessor will endeavour above all things to be absolutely pure. In order to

guard himself he should never neglect to use all possible precautions, both natural and supernatural. Before hearing confessions he will invoke the Holy Spirit to keep him from all impure thoughts ; and during the confession—if the penitent discloses some sin contrary to holy purity—he will make use of short ejaculatory prayers. He will be careful to preserve a correct demeanour while hearing the confession, and scrupulously avoid looking at the penitent (particularly if of the opposite sex), or showing any signs of interest, disgust, or repulsion. It will sometimes be necessary for him to question the penitent, and this should be done with great care and modesty ; he must always cease to question when he has good reason to suppose that the nature of the sin has been fully disclosed, and avoid any undue curiosity. After the confession he will at once dismiss the matter from his mind, and strengthen himself by prayer to God.

We must now consider another virtue that the priest, as a spiritual father, should possess—that of *prudence*. By this is meant not worldly prudence, but that supernatural virtue planted in the soul by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.[1]

Prudence is especially necessary in the following cases : [2] (i) In allowing penitents liberty to go to another priest for confession. We must recognize human weakness, and face the fact that there are certain persons who would stay away from confession rather than go to a certain priest.

[1] *Summa* II–II, Q. xlvii.

[2] cp. Marc, *Instit. Moral.*, §§ 1788–91, upon which the above is based. The prudence necessary in the choice of probable opinions is discussed at some length, but as the question of Probabilism is not dealt with in the text it has been thought best to omit it. This author most ably defends the position known as Equiprobabilism.

(ii) In hearing the confessions of the opposite sex the priest ought to observe caution. His manner should tend to dignity and even sternness rather than to familiarity and pleasantness. He should avoid all unnecessary talk, and should suppress the tendency some women have of prolonging the confession by seeking advice on all kinds of subjects. There is a type of pious female who delights in long 'spiritual talks' when she comes to confession; and the more the inclination is indulged the worse she becomes. We have already mentioned that the priest should always avoid looking directly at the penitent, either when she is making her confession or when he is giving advice. If questions have to be asked on sins contrary to holy purity, the confessor must take care not to put any questions which might be so misunderstood as to injure his own good name or bring the sacrament into disrepute. When he has to hear a woman's confession after dark, if it is at all possible he should arrange for a third party to be in church; the custom of hearing a confession in the vestry under such circumstances is, to say the least of it, most injudicious. The conduct of a priest towards his female penitents outside the confessional also calls for prudence. He should avoid all familiarity, particularly with young women; he should not visit them at their homes, except in the ordinary course of parochial visiting, and he should not accept the presents they are often too ready to shower upon him.

(iii) In questioning and advising penitents care is necessary. With regard to the former, only those questions which are really necessary should be asked, and, with regard to the latter, one should be as brief as possible, and avoid giving advice simply for the sake of saying something.

(iv) In giving or deferring absolution the conditions mentioned in the course of this work should be kept in mind.

(v) In the instructions given for the correction of special faults the confessor should exhibit caution. In some cases it is better to remain silent, and to leave the penitent in his good faith. This subject is dealt with in detail when considering the duties of the confessor as a director of souls.

(vi) In imposing a penance the confessor should consider carefully the condition and ability of his penitent.

(vii) In guarding the seal of confession the confessor will observe the precautions already mentioned.

CHAPTER III

THE CONFESSOR AS A DIRECTOR OF SOULS

A quotation from S. Teresa—The need of a serious study of Moral Theology—Mistaken objections to this study—Difficulties to be overcome—Text-books recommended—The need of Anglican text-books on the subject—The minimum of knowledge required—The need of Dogmatic and Ascetic Theology in addition—Cases in which the confessor is bound to give the penitent instruction.

A CONFESSOR, if he is to be competent in his office, must be possessed of considerable special knowledge. In the first place, he ought to have a thorough acquaintance with the scientific principles of Moral Theology, so that he may apply them correctly in practice. He must also be fitted to direct and instruct the penitent, if either be needed, before giving absolution. We may, therefore, in considering the priest as a spiritual director, profitably inquire into the standard of scientific knowledge required by the confessor in order to fulfil his office in a competent manner.

S. Teresa in her biography says :

Half-instructed confessors have done my soul great harm ; for I could not always have such learned ones as I would have desired. They certainly did not wish to deceive me, but the fact was that they knew no better. Of something which was a venial sin they said it was no sin, and out of a very grave mortal sin they made a venial sin. This has done me such harm that my speaking here of so great an evil, as a warning to others, will be readily understood.[1]

One may piously hope that the saint's warning

[1] *Life*, chapter v, 6.

may be taken to heart! It is, surely, not too much to say that many of our priests who constantly hear confessions entirely underrate the importance and need of a serious study of Moral Theology. I remember a young priest, just ordained and twenty-four years of age, expressing great indignation because the bishop wrote to his vicar saying that he did not wish the newly-ordained priest to hear the confessions of adults for at least two years. Of course, the bishop was quite right. Would that more of our bishops treated the subject so seriously, and made proper restrictions with regard to the administration of the sacrament of Penance! From this it must not be inferred that one considers our priests incompetent. There are many learned and good confessors amongst us, as the high spiritual standard observed amongst our priests and people abundantly testifies; but we must plead for a more serious and *scientific* study of Moral Theology. It is not a subject to be read in odd moments in an armchair, but to be studied with the same care and attention that one would give to other branches of theology.

There are several reasons which contribute to the neglect of the study of Moral Theology as an exact science, of which we may note the following. The first, and perhaps the chief, reason rests upon a misconception which is embodied in the following question put to me on more than one occasion: 'Have you ever found your Moral Theology of any use when hearing confessions?' The question will to many people appear absurd, but it arises out of the utterly erroneous idea that theory is one thing and practice another, a fault Englishmen are constantly falling into in all departments of life. Practice simply means the application of certain theoretical principles to individual cases;

of course, difficulty often arises in applying the theoretical knowledge; hence, I suppose, the question. A priest who has little knowledge of Moral Theology will probably, in his ignorance, find few cases in which his smattering of theory may be applied; but one who is deeply grounded in it will find that the whole of his advice and direction is simply an application of his theoretical knowledge to the cases brought before him.

We also often hear the well-worn expression 'sanctified common sense,' which by some people is considered, if not the sole equipment necessary for the confessor, at least his most valuable asset. Quite apart from the fact that very few of us have our 'common sense' much 'sanctified,' its possession alone would not suffice for the direction of souls. It is quite true that a knowledge of human nature, tact, and understanding are of great use, and a confessor who has such valuable gifts should indeed be truly thankful, for he has a wonderful advantage over many of his brethren. But he should remember that he is exposed to the danger of deciding in important cases according to his own individual opinions rather than on approved doctrinal principles. That this is wrong will be granted when we recognize that the priest does not administer the sacrament as an individual, but as a minister of the Catholic Church. Neither can years of experience make up for a lack of theoretical knowledge; in fact, the more opportunities of giving direction on individualistic lines that a priest has, the more is the harm done owing to the number of penitents who have passed through his hands.

TEXT-BOOKS

Having said so much by way of criticism, we must state in common fairness that the would-be

student of Moral Theology has certain difficulties to overcome in the pursuit of his studies. The most important is the question of text-books. Although considerable progress has been made during the last fifteen years in the study of Moral Theology by Anglican scholars, it still remains true to say that an Anglican text-book on the subjecthas still to be written—that is, a book in which the subject of morals is treated in a scientific and systematic manner.

The book which most nearly fulfils our requirements is *Some Principles of Moral Theology*, by Dr. K. E. Kirk, and this may be supplemented by a further volume by the same author entitled *Conscience and its Problems*. There can be no question that the serious student must make himself acquainted, at first hand, with the *Prima et Secunda Secundae* of the *Summa Theologica* of S. Thomas Aquinas, which is so often quoted in the present volume. This is the great classic on Christian ethics, and it can be studied concurrently with Dr. Kirk's books. If an English translation of the *Summa* is desired we would recommend that published by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province ; the parts required are contained in nine volumes. Amongst recent publications should be noted *Moral Theology*, by F. J. Hall and F. H. Hallock ; this is written by two priests of the American Episcopal Church, and, although it suffers from over-condensation, contains valuable material for further detailed study.

Since our literature is so scanty, the student is driven of necessity to the study of Roman Catholic books on Moral Theology, and that in spite of the not entirely unjust prejudice some people feel against using them. There are many such text-books by modern Roman Catholic writers, and the selection of a particular author should be made

with discrimination. We may say, speaking quite generally, that members of the Dominican Order follow closely the traditional teaching of S. Thomas Aquinas, while the Jesuit writers look to S. Alphonsus Liguori as their chief authority ; and we would express, as a personal opinion, our preference for the Dominican theology. A standard work in Latin is the *Manuale Theologiae Moralis*, written by the Dominican, D. M. Prümmer; this is in three volumes and issued by the Herder Book Co. We would also mention the following text books, written in English, which have been published in recent years: *A Hand-Book of Moral Theology* (five volumes) by Anthony Koch and Arthur Preuss; and *Moral Theology* (two volumes) by J. A. McHugh and C. J. Callan.

The best work based upon the teaching of S. Alphonsus that has come to our notice is the *Institutiones Morales* of C. Marc ; it is admirably planned, and written in an easy, intelligible style. The *Theologia Moralis* of S. Alphonsus may be obtained in a variety of editions ; it is useful for reference by advanced students, but it is not necessary for the beginner. S. Alphonsus successfully maintained the mean between the rigorists and laxists of his period. A very useful exposition, written in English, is *Moral and Pastoral Theology* (four volumes) by Henry Davis, S.J.

As a guide to the practice of the confessional, which should be distinguished from the scientific study of Christian morals, several works are available, and constant reference is made to them in the present volume. It is unfortunate that Dr. W. W. Webb's pioneer work, *The Cure of Souls*, is now out of print ;[1] but it may be obtained fairly easily through second-hand booksellers. This book was published a long time ago, and has had considerable

[1] The author was a bishop of the American Episcopal Church.

influence on subsequent writers ; it is packed with valuable and sound information, and the footnotes introduce us to a wide literature. The student should try to obtain a copy, not so much for direct study, but as a book of reference.

Advice on Hearing Confessions, edited by C. A. Harris, is an abridged edition of Dr. Pusey's translation of the Abbé Gaume's well-known work, and will also be found useful for general reference. The most substantial work on this subject is *The Theory and Practice of the Confessional*, by C. E. Schieler and H. J. Heuser, and it may well be used as a supplement to the Anglican books we have mentioned, provided the reader recognizes that there is much in it which does not apply to our own particular needs.

Mention has been made of a ' not entirely unjust prejudice ' against the use of Roman Catholic books on Moral Theology. One feels that it is quite impossible to take over the whole of the modern Roman system of casuistry, and to say this or that must bind *sub gravi* or *sub levi* in a particular case ; circumstances are different with us, and need special treatment by theologians having the necessary scientific training in morals. Hence the need of Anglican text-books. We require a system of casuistry adapted to our own particular needs, based, one would suggest, upon the moral teaching of S. Thomas Aquinas, and which would develop in the course of time in the same way that the modern Roman system has developed out of Aquinas. In support of this view we may instance the lengthy discussions to be found in Fr. H. Davis's book, referred to above, with regard to the sins, venial and mortal, which may be committed by a priest in saying Mass. They cannot bind a priest of the Church of England because of the difference in conditions ;

yet we ought to have some authoritative rulings on this important matter, and in the text-book of the future the writer would give his rulings and his scientific reasons for them. Also the question of the degree of obedience to be rendered to our ecclesiastical superiors, the obligations of the Divine Office, jurisdiction in hearing confessions, the doctrine of Probabilism, and many other subjects would have to be dealt with according to our own particular requirements. It may be said, in conclusion, that if a priest wishes to be really competent, in addition to studying text-books he should also make use of collected 'cases of conscience.' For this purpose J. P. Gury's *Casus Conscientiae* is recommended, although the same reservation must be made that all his rulings do not apply in our particular case.[1]

Having considered in a general way the scientific equipment of the confessor, we now proceed to a more detailed examination of the subject. Every confessor ought to know how to classify sins of common occurrence as venial or mortal. He must be able to recognize the disposition of the penitent, since this is an essential part of the sacrament, and if the penitent is not properly disposed he must know what means to employ in order to obtain the necessary dispositions. He must understand thoroughly the nature of the penance he ought to impose under certain given circumstances, and what remedies are to be applied for specific sins. He should have a clear knowledge of the doctrine concerning restitution and know when to demand that restitution be made, and those cases

[1] Dr. Kirk's *Conscience and its Problems*, which has already been mentioned in the text, may be regarded as a study in casuistic method; and two volumes of my own—*Present Day Problems in Christian Morals* and *Belief and Conduct*—have the same end in view.

in which it can wholly or partly be dispensed with ; this important subject often does not receive the attention it deserves. He must also know what constitutes a valid contract, and under what circumstances a contract becomes invalid ; under this head will come the important subject of the marriage contract. He must know, in addition, when he ought to question as to the number, circumstances, and species of various sins.

In order to attain this standard, which, after all, is the minimum, a priest who hears confessions ought to be studying his Moral Theology constantly, not only to increase his knowledge, but also to retain what he has already learned. There is not much time to search the memory for half-forgotten facts when one is hearing confessions. The case must be dealt with promptly, and in order to do this the confessor must have his theory clearly in his mind ; consequently, continuous reading is necessary. Besides a thorough knowledge of Moral Theology the confessor should be well grounded in dogmatics, in order that he may direct his penitents in matters of faith. Since he is the teacher of his people he will, of course, be expected to know Dogmatic Theology quite apart from his position as a confessor, but the subject is related to the confessional quite as much as to the pulpit. He must also remember that he not only has to show his penitents how to avoid sin, but also to lead them along the road to perfection. In order to do this he must study Ascetic Theology so that he may not err in that all-important work of leading souls nearer and nearer to God.

INSTRUCTION OF PENITENTS

We will conclude this section by considering certain cases in which the confessor is bound to

give the penitent instruction before bestowing absolution. In the first place, instruction must be given if the penitent is ignorant of those things essential to the validity of the sacrament of Penance ; for instance, if he does not understand the nature of contrition, or has no idea of purpose of amendment. Such cases may easily occur at the time of a Parochial Mission, when poor and ignorant people may be moved to make their confession without having any clear idea of the nature of the sacrament. The instruction should, of course, be brief and to the point, and the confessor should arrange for the penitent to receive more thorough teaching at a later and more convenient time. Again, absolution cannot be given to a person who is ignorant of the rudiments of the Christian Faith ; he must at least believe in one God, Who is the Supreme Ruler of the universe, the Rewarder of good, and Who punishes evil. He ought also to have some knowledge of the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. It may be objected that such ignorance will rarely, if ever, be found, but personal experience has proved the contrary. I have had several cases of persons under instruction for confirmation who could not be considered to have any real idea of God, and these (with two or three exceptions) not illiterate people, but persons of average Council School education. A large number of adult candidates have no idea at all of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation. Probably the reason of this is that many people have no religious education in their childhood. They may have attended a Sunday class at some undenominational meeting-house where a ' be good and you will be happy ' teaching has passed for religious instruction ; in later years they have read

tracts and pamphlets pushed under their doors by Latter Day Saints, Swedenborgians, etc., and the result is an absolutely chaotic condition of mind. Finally, the confessor must instruct a penitent who intends receiving the Blessed Sacrament, and is ignorant of the doctrine of the Real Presence.

Father Slater gives the following advice with regard to penitents whom the confessor finds to be ignorant of other matters which are of precept :

Ignorance of those Christian truths whose knowledge is required by precept, and of the obligations of one's state of life, is not a bar to valid absolution, and in spite of it absolution may lawfully be given on condition that the penitent undertake to learn what he should know, if the confessor cannot give the necessary instruction at once. No general rule can be laid down as to whether the confessor should instruct a penitent whom he finds to be ignorant on other matters. Various cases must be distinguished. If the ignorance of the penitent is morally hurtful to him, as is an erroneous conscience which thinks that a perfectly harmless act is sinful, the confessor should put his conscience right. Again, if the penitent asks whether an action is lawful or not, the confessor should instruct him. In other cases, if the penitent is ignorant of his obligation, and he would not fulfil it even if he were told, as a general rule the confessor may and should abstain from telling him under the circumstances. For the information would do no good, but only harm, inasmuch as the sins which hitherto were only material would henceforth be formal. There is, however, an exception to this rule when what is done in ignorance and good faith is a cause of public scandal, for then the public good requires that the penitent should be told even to his temporary private loss.

On these principles authors agree that if a confessor detect a diriment impediment between parties who think that they are validly married, he should not inform them of it, at any rate until he has obtained the necessary dispensation, so that he can at once proceed to set the matter right.[1]

[1] T. Slater, *A Manual of Moral Theology*, 6th ed., vol. ii, pp. 160, 170. See also S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. v, nn. 607–616, for a detailed treatment of this difficult subject.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONFESSOR AS A SPIRITUAL PHYSICIAN (I)

The analogy between the physician of the body and of the soul—Diagnosis, and the prescribing of remedies—Besetting or root sins—The seven capital sins—Difficulties in the way of a correct diagnosis of root sins—How to overcome these difficulties—The application of remedies—Psycho-analysis and its dangers—The rationale of confession.

A CLOSE analogy exists between the duties of the physician of the body and that of the soul. When a physician is consulted by a sick person his first aim is to diagnose the disease from which the person is suffering. In order to attain this end he carefully questions and examines his patient, and does not rest until he has discovered the seat of the trouble. Correct diagnosis is of supreme importance in the practice of medicine, and no satisfactory treatment can be prescribed until this is established. Having determined the nature of the disease, the physician now proceeds to apply suitable remedies for its alleviation, and, if possible, its cure. These remedies will consist of medicines, special diet, etc., according to the nature of the complaint. Often the physician will demand that his patient shall make an entire change in his habits of life, and he expects his advice to be followed if the patient is to remain under his care. So also the spiritual physician has a twofold duty to perform : he must diagnose the

sin which is sapping the spiritual vitality of his penitent, and, having made a correct diagnosis, he must prescribe suitable remedies to strengthen his patient and to guard him against relapse in the future.

It is well known that almost all individuals suffer from what is called a 'besetting sin'—that is, there is some particular sin, sometimes more than one, which the penitent is strongly tempted to commit. Other sins may have little or no fascination for him, but to this sin there is always violent temptation, and it is often yielded to almost without the penitent being aware that he has fallen into it. The root sin is the weak spot in the spiritual armour; and the penitent should be led to recognize that here he must always be on his guard. It often leads, moreover, to the commission of other sins. For instance, the craving for drink may lead to dishonesty, lying, neglect of responsibilities, and many other sins; once conquer the root sin, and the others will disappear with it. This besetting sin, which, if allowed to grow unhindered, will work havoc with the soul, is generally one of the seven capital sins—so called because they are the chief sins which destroy the soul, and from which all other sins spring.

These capital sins are pride, coveteousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth; and the list is of great antiquity. The catalogue, as Dr. Kirk has indicated, is an attempt to enumerate 'in theological rather than in psychological language, and from the point of view of experience rather than from that of scientific investigation, those of the primary instincts which are most likely to give rise to sin.'[1] Pride is an excess of self-love, and by it man robs God of the glory due to Him. It is

[1] *Some Principles of Moral Theology*, p. 266.

the most subtle of all sins, and may be regarded as a misdirection of the self-regarding emotion, which can only be counteracted by a consciousness of a divine Power, greater than man himself, to Whom he is accountable.[1] The contrary virtue is humility. Covetousness or avarice is excessive acquisitiveness, and is defined by the theologians as 'an inordinate love of riches'; the opposite virtue is liberality, by which we make a proper use of this world's goods to the glory of God, and for the aid of those less fortunate than ourselves. S. Paul says that 'the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.' Lust is the unlawful expression of the sex instinct, and consists in the satisfaction of the sinful passions of the flesh; the theologians name chastity as the opposite virtue. Anger is the inordinate desire for revenge, and from it spring quarrelling, blasphemy, contumely, sedition, and fighting. It usurps the power of God, for 'Vengeance is Mine: I will repay, saith the Lord'; the contrary virtue is meekness. Gluttony is the inordinate love of eating or drinking; opposed to it is the virtue of temperance, by which a proper restraint is placed upon the desires. Envy is sadness at another's good, it being considered as lessening one's own; ambitious and mean-spirited persons are generally envious of others; it is directly opposed to brotherly love, which leads us to rejoice in the good of our fellow men. Sloth is laziness of the soul in the exercise of virtue; the Church of Laodicea was guilty of this sin. It is conquered by the virtue of diligence.

Many difficulties present themselves when an attempt is made to diagnose the besetting sin. It is true that some of these sins are easily recog-

[1] cp. W. McDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 13th ed., p. 192.

nized ; the victim of lust can hardly fail to see the seriousness of his sin. In the same way the drunkard stands self-convicted of his vice. But this does not always apply to the gourmand devoted to the pleasures of the table, 'Whose god is their belly ; and whose glory is in their shame.' Many penitents are quite ignorant of their *real* root sin ; indeed, they often consider it to be one of their virtues. The avaricious man considers he is simply careful, the proud man holds to his pride, and calls it a proper regard for his position and character. Some people are totally ignorant of spiritual sloth, and consider the weak excuses they offer as ample cause for their neglect of God. Anger, when it is violent, is generally recognized as a root sin, but very often just and unjust anger are confused. Envy and covetousness are almost as subtle as the sin of pride.[1]

Although the confessor cannot fail to recognize how difficult it often is to diagnose the root sin, yet, considering the supreme importance of a correct diagnosis, he will not, on that account, be deterred from his task. He ought to know the besetting sin or sins of each of his penitents in the same way as the physician can name the disease of each of his patients. If the penitent does not recognize the fact that each of us has a besetting sin the confessor should inform him, and point out the vital importance of discovering it and

[1] It is not possible to enter into a detailed consideration of the psychological process of 'rationalization,' whereby people succeed in finding convincing reasons for doing what they wish to do, even when the action is a wrong one. The subject is fully discussed in all modern works on psychology, and I have tried to apply it to religious difficulties in my *Belief and Conduct*, under the title, 'Concerning Hypocrites,' pp. 9–13.

fighting against it. When the penitent cannot state what is his root sin the confessor may help him to attain his object by emphasizing the importance of prayer to the Holy Spirit that He may enlighten the understanding ; and by this means clarity of thought and the right direction of the intention will be obtained. Then should follow a careful examination of conscience, when the penitent will pay special attention to the *motives* which lead to the commission of a sin. He may ask, ' Why was I angry on such an occasion ? Was it because I was *envious*, or was my *pride* hurt ? ' An experienced confessor will also be able to aid the penitent by judicious questions to arrive at a right conclusion. Sermons upon this subject and a course upon the Seven Capital Sins always result in better confessions being made.

When the root sin has been discovered the confessor can proceed to apply the remedies for its cure. He should be able clearly to point out the dangers attendant upon the particular sin, and those other sins which are the ' daughters ' of the root sin ; and here his theoretical knowledge of Moral Theology will be of great value. It is always dangerous, if not immoral, to smooth over the consequences of sin, and the confessor must fearlessly and plainly point out to his penitent the dangers which beset him. We must, however, include a warning against causing the penitent to fall into despair. This will be guarded against if the confessor emphasizes the truth that, by a worthy reception of the sacrament of Penance, God gives us more than enough grace to overcome our sins. Also clear and definite teaching should be given on the nature of true contrition and purpose of amendment, which will be of great help to the penitent.

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AND ITS DANGERS

The multitude of popular books on psycho-analytical theory and practice which have been issued in recent years has not only familiarized educated persons with these methods, but has resulted in much harmful amateur psycho-analysis. I am convinced that there is a real risk of the clergy confusing the methods of psycho-analytical practice with those of the confessional, and, further, the popularity of this new therapy tends to obscure the dangers which attend it, even when it is employed by trained practitioners. The limitations which a writer must of necessity impose upon himself in a general work such as this preclude my discussing the subject at any length ; but it seems obligatory that I should offer some account of my opinions on both of these points for the consideration of the reader.

First, as to the dangers of psycho-analysis. As a preliminary consideration we need to remember that the therapy of psycho-analysis involves the taking to bits of our mental machinery, re-ordering it, and putting it together again. Once this fact is recognized, we can realize the possibility of an analyst being capable of taking the mechanism to bits, but utterly incapable of putting it together again. When this happens, and it has happened, the result is disaster. It means nothing less than the mental breakdown of the sufferer.

When we examine the methods advocated by Sigmund Freud, the recognized father of the psycho-analytical movement, our fears are by no means set at rest. Freud's system began to take definite shape when he discovered what he calls 'repression,' according to which any horrible or unpleasant experience is immediately dismissed

from the mind. As a matter of fact, however, he contends, it is driven down into the 'unconscious' mind and there works havoc by producing mental conflict and illness. The conflict can only be made to cease by bringing the forgotten experience again into the region of the conscious mind, and this always involves 'resistance' on the part of the patient. Although he desires to be healed, the sufferer unconsciously resists the efforts of the psycho-therapeutist to bring the unhappy past to light. In order to overcome this resistance the analyst makes use of what is called 'transference,' the patient transferring to the physician the emotions which have caused his trouble. Now, according to Freud, 'transference' always involves the patient falling in love with his physician, and the only hope of permanent recovery is that he should do so. No comment is needed to show how fraught with danger is this doctrine, and how far removed it is from the rationale of the Catholic confessional.

We need, moreover, to go a step further forward, and recognize that Freud traces all functional nervous disorders to a sexual origin. In support of this view he has developed an elaborate system of symbolism, in which almost everything in heaven and upon earth is made to represent some sexual idea. A recent writer,[1] in criticizing Freud's *Collected Papers*, has described his symbolism as based upon the principle of heads I win, tails you lose. Freud, he continues, 'exhibits the type of mind that constructed the Bestiaries of the Middle Ages, where animals are represented as symbols of covetousness, avarice, and so on. It is a type of mind which, when not united with a strong critical faculty, is almost the exact opposite of the scientific method.'

[1] See *The Times Literary Supplement*, Feb. 5, 1925.

It is here that the spiritual physician, together with the writer of the article just quoted, would definitely cross swords with the Freudians. Any system of body or mind healing should be based upon sound scientific principles. The issues at stake are too grave to admit of loose empirical treatment. We must therefore ask the question : Is Freud a genuine scientific investigator, or is he an illogical, uncritical system-maker ? If Freud's system is unscientific, the above writer contends, it should be possible, using the same methods as he does, to build entirely different systems on the same series of facts.

'The attempt has been made,' he continues, 'and is at least partially successful—Adler, Jung, Stekel, for instance, all have systems different from Freud's. They use the same facts ; they give, for instance, quite different analyses of the same dreams. They claim to cure as high a percentage of patients. This one fact alone is sufficient to show that we are not here in the presence of anything that can be called science. Of psycho-analysis as a whole we may say that the difficulties presented by it are due to the obscurity of the terms employed, the lack of logic in its development, the lack of evidence in its hypothesis, and the fact that different systems, all equally satisfactory, are incompatible with one another. It is difficult, in the face of these defects, to believe that psycho-analysis has achieved anything of real value.' [1]

What has already been written should serve to show that there is small possibility of confusion between the methods of psycho-analysis and the Catholic confessional. There is, indeed, little in common between the two except the bringing to light of past actions. The differences, on the other hand, are sharply defined. In the rationale

[1] A more lenient, but very searching, criticism of the Freudian theory is to be found in W. McDougall, *An Outline of Abnormal Psychology*. Those who desire to be informed on psycho-analytical methods by a writer who has faith in them should read R. H. Hingley, *Psycho-Analysis*. Amongst the

of the confessional there is (*a*) No attempt at a deep and prolonged exploration of the mind ; the confessor only questions his penitent when he has good reason for so doing, and always employs economy in his questioning.[1] (*b*) No ' repressed complexes ' are brought to light, for the simple reason that the penitent is entirely unaware of their existence, and cannot therefore confess them. (*c*) No use is made of the method of free association, or of dream interpretation. (*d*) Neither has the phenomenon of ' transference of the *libido* ' any place in the Catholic system, and the slightest sign of its appearance would be sternly dealt with by the experienced confessor. In emphasizing these differences we do not fail to recognize that sometimes there is a close relationship between spiritual and mental upsets, and here the co-operation between the priest and the psychologist would be of great value. But it is not the Freudian psychology which can be harnessed with the Catholic system of confession. The gulf between them is too wide to be bridged.

THE RATIONALE OF CONFESSION

Before entering upon any discussion of the process of the confessional from the psychological point of view, it may be well to emphasize that its therapeutic value cannot be separated from its religious and spiritual implications. It is fundamental to the Catholic conception of the sacrament of Penance that here the soul comes in direct contact with ultimate Reality ; there is a definite

many popular expositions of these methods I consider Mr. Hingley's book is still the best available.

[1] cp. p. 68 et seq. The difference between the exploration of psycho-analysis and of the confessional will be made evident in the next section of this work.

co-operation of the human with the Divine Will; and the penitent, using the sacrament with the proper dispositions, finds in it a means of supernatural grace. This outlook, however, does not preclude us from investigating its psychological aspects. The inquiry is of practical as well as of academic interest; and, so far as I am aware, it has not previously been attempted by moralists. With some diffidence, I would suggest that the rationale of the confessional may best be described as *a method of rational persuasion.* The significance of this phrase will, I trust, become apparent as we proceed with our exposition.

The process consists broadly of three stages, which may be regarded as co-extensive, rather than as sharply divided the one from the others. The first stage is that of *Exploration*; which has as its object to obtain a knowledge of, and to form a true judgement concerning the penitent's mental, moral, and spiritual condition. This exploration must be considered both from the penitent's side, and from that of the confessor. The penitent arrives at a knowledge of himself chiefly by way of careful self-examination, and, so far as is possible, by an analysis of his motives. Obviously, the degree of success attained here will depend largely on the mental capacity and intelligence of the penitent; but in actual practice the experienced confessor usually finds ample material as a starting-point for a further and more complete exploration. The confessor's responsibility is not only to diagnose the penitent's condition from the data provided, but also to further the exploration by judicious questioning, and to render assistance in the discovery of predominant instincts, emotions, sentiments, and motives to action.

Thus, by co-operation between penitent and con-

fessor the latter arrives at a considered judgement of the former's condition, and is able to proceed to the next stage, which may be called the process of *Reconstruction*. Here the responsibility rests mainly with the confessor. It is his task, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and by the use of his intellectual equipment as a director of souls, to lead the penitent to see himself as he really is, and not as he has heretofore imagined himself to be. He must not only recognize his maladjustments, but become convinced that they must, and can, be rectified, so that he may attain to a balanced and unified personality. This conviction may be regarded, psychologically, as the essential factor in the process of the reconstruction of character, and is brought home to the penitent by the 'rational persuasion' of the confessor. Priests should therefore be prepared to take considerable pains in order to assure themselves that they possess the trust and confidence of their penitents, and that they are actually accepting and following the counsel that has been given them in confession.

At this stage we sometimes meet with a condition which is somewhat, but not strictly, analogous to the 'resistance' experienced by the psychoanalyst; although, as has already been pointed out, the rationale of the confessional has no place for the 'transference of the *libido*' to the confessor himself. The penitent will receive advice apparently willingly and without protest; but, usually quite unconsciously, he is in rebellion against it, and has no intention of carrying it out in practice.[1] When the confessor discovers this condition of mind he must impress upon the penitent the

[1] The 'resistance' is thus an expression of the penitent's unconscious reluctance to make a complete surrender of himself to God.

necessity for recognizing that, if a ' cure ' is to be effected, he must follow the advice of his confessor as loyally and strictly as he would that of his medical adviser in bodily sickness.

The final stage of the process is *Rehabilitation.* To revert for a moment to the language of theology, a change of mind, a μετάνοια, has been effected in the penitent by his contrition and renunciation of his sinful past, and his absolution has restored him to a state of grace. He has been convinced of what is wrong with him, and has accepted himself as he really is ; emotionally, he is eager to progress on the right lines ; and he is conscious that he has been restored to communion with God. He is now in the position to progress in the task of re-forming his character, in which task he is aided by further use of the sacrament of Penance and spiritual direction. The psychological effect of the successful use of the sacrament of Penance is, to use the words of Dr. Thouless,[1] 'to maintain a predominantly healthy-minded attitude towards sin, as well as providing a disciplinary remedy against it.' We can go even further than this, and claim that it produces those qualities which Dr. McDougall considers the essentials of a strong moral character. ' Two things,' he writes,[2] ' are essential to strong moral character, over and above the possession of appropriate moral sentiments : namely, first, the conscious assemblage of the admired qualities in an ideal of character, with some stable estimate of their relative values ; secondly, a strong and sensitive self-respect which perpetually renews and sustains the effort to realize those qualities in one's own conduct and character.' The penitent has found,

[1] *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, p. 56.
[2] *Character and the Conduct of Life*, p. 68.

in the living Christ Who knows him and loves him, 'an ideal of character' which will constantly sustain him in his spiritual effort; and 'a strong and sensitive self-respect' has been acquired by his conviction that 'if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.'[1]

[1] 2 Cor. v. 17.

CHAPTER V

THE CONFESSOR AS A SPIRITUAL PHYSICIAN (II)

Occasions of sin—Analysis of the various occasions of sin—General principles to be observed in dealing with the *occasionarii*—Further consideration of those placed *in occasione proxima necessaria*—Remedies suggested—The treatment of habitual and relapsing sinners—Warning with regard to recidivists—How to deal with them—Under what circumstances a recidivist should be given or refused absolution.

THERE are three classes of penitents which present special difficulties to the confessor as a spiritual physician, and need careful treatment. These are those placed in an occasion of sin, habitual sinners, and relapsing sinners. We will consider each separately in this chapter.

OCCASIONS OF SIN[1]

A confessor who wishes to give the best treatment to this class of penitent should understand the theoretical grounds upon which practical advice may be offered. It will be necessary, therefore, to employ certain technical expressions used by moralists in dealing with the subject. It is of great

[1] cp. S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. v, nn. 452–58; Marc, *Instit. Moral.* §§ 1819–25; A. Lehmkuhl, *Theologia Moralis*, II, n. 485; and Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, p. 488. As will be seen, many of S. Alphonsus' rulings have been accepted, nor do I think he can be accused of undue laxity.

practical importance, particularly in sins against the Seventh Commandment, that we should know, on proper scientific grounds, when to demand that the penitent shall definitely withdraw himself from the occasion of sin, and, when this is impossible, to be able to advise him how to make the best of a bad case.

By an ' occasion of sin ' is meant either some person or external object which leads any one to sin. It is comprised of two elements : an external object which entices to sin, and an internal inclination in the person himself to commit the sin. The occasion of sin is classified by moralists as follows : The occasion is called ' proximate ' or ' immediate ' (*occasio proxima*) when the danger of sinning is great ; it is called ' remote ' (*occasio remota*) when the danger is slight. When the *occasio proxima* is of such a nature that it presents a serious danger of sinning for most people it is termed ' an absolute immediate occasion ' (*per se* or *absolute proxima*) ; if it is a serious danger for a certain individual owing to his particular disposition, it is called ' a relative immediate occasion' (*per accidens* or *relativa*). So an *absolute proxima occasio* may for a strong man be an *occasio remota*, while for a weak man an *occasio remota* may become an *occasio proxima* ; for instance, for a temperate man who rarely, if ever, exceeds in drink a public-house is an *occasio remota* ; for a drunkard it is an *occasio proxima*.

An occasion may also be ' continual ' (*occasio continua*) or ' interrupted ' (*occasio interrupta*) ; it is continual when a person is always exposed to it—such is concubinage, or when a man keeps in his office some one with whom he has sinned ; it is an *occasio interrupta* when one is only occasionally exposed to it, as when a man tempted to drink

attends meetings where he will be expected to partake of intoxicants.

Finally, the occasion may be either ' voluntary ' (*occasio voluntaria*) or ' necessary ' (*occasio necessaria*). An *occasio voluntaria* is one which may easily be avoided ; when the occasion cannot be avoided, even if the penitent wishes to escape from it, it is an *occasio necessaria*. The latter is further divided into ' physically necessary,' when the person cannot physically withdraw himself from it, and ' morally necessary ' when it cannot be avoided without grave scandal, or placing one's self in worse danger of sin, or serious loss to honour or fortune.

Having these definitions in mind, we can now proceed to consider the general principles laid down by moralists for our guidance. (i) It is necessary to avoid an *occasio proxima*. This will be easily understood, for, as followers of Christ, we are bound to avoid sin, and in order to do so we must employ the proper means to that end. Consequently he who places himself in an *occasio proxima* sins grievously by so doing. (ii) Also an *occasio voluntaria* must be avoided, for he who *wishes* to remain in an occasion of sin has no real desire to overcome it, and his purpose of amendment is defective, making him an unfit subject for the reception of absolution. (iii) It is not always necessary to avoid *occasiones remotae* ; in fact, it is impossible for us to do so, since they are always with us, and sin may be avoided by prayer and the sacraments in spite of them. If, however, the confessor suspects that an *occasio remota* is in danger of becoming an *occasio proxima* for a penitent he should warn him to avoid it. (iv) The case of an *occasio necessaria* is more difficult. Since it cannot be avoided, the penitent must be advised as to the best means to employ in order to guard

himself against the danger, so that in the end it may become an *occasio remota*. On this matter S. Alphonsus says :

> The reason is that an occasion of sin is not properly a sin in itself nor does it necessarily lead to sin. A genuine sorrow for sin, therefore, and a determination not to fall again into sin are quite consistent with an occasion of sin. Although every man is bound to remove the proximate danger of sin, this is to be understood as applying to a man's spontaneous willing of such a dangerous occasion. But when the occasion is morally necessary, the danger of it will be made harmless by apt remedial measures, and in such a case God will not be remiss in giving the assistance of His grace to him who has sincerely determined not to offend Him.[1]

(v) As a general rule with penitents *in occasione continua*, absolution ought to be deferred until that which constitutes the occasion has been given up. Many moralists hold that even when it is the first time, and the penitent promises that he will give up the occasion, absolution should not be given until the promise has been fulfilled ; for one who will expose himself to the danger of breaking his resolution of amendment must be considered as indisposed, and the confessor who absolves him does not fulfil either his duty as judge by pronouncing absolution over one indisposed, or as a physician by neglecting to apply the necessary remedies against a relapse into sin.[2] An exception to

[1] *Homo Apostolicus*, tract. ult. n. 6.

[2] cp. S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. vi, n. 454, 'If, then, such a man were to desire absolution before giving up the occasion of sin, he would not be rightly disposed, because he would expose himself to the probable danger of breaking his resolve. For this reason, the confessor who absolved him, while yet leaving him in such a danger of sin, would certainly sin against his office of judge and no less against his office of physician, in that he would give absolution to one badly disposed, without prescribing the remedy necessary to his salvation.'

the strictness of the rule would, however, be made for a sound and exceptional reason, such as when the penitent shows extraordinary contrition, or when absolution must be given at once ; as when the penitent is in danger of death. (vi) Those who are *in occasione interrupta* may be absolved if they sincerely promise to give up the occasion. If, however, after two or three times there is no sign of amendment absolution ought to be deferred until the occasion has been given up. When there is some improvement, but the penitent has not quite given up the occasion, the confessor will have to consider the possibility of harm being done by deferring absolution owing to the penitent becoming despondent.

We must now return to a further consideration of the important class of penitents who are *in occasione proxima necessaria*. What are we to do if we find they continually relapse ? We may discover that they have neglected to employ the means advised by the confessor ; in that case absolution should be deferred until there are signs of amendment. But what is to be done if they *have* employed the means, and yet continue to fall into sin ? Some moralists hold that they may be absolved continually if they sincerely promise to amend. I would prefer the ruling of S. Alphonsus, who teaches that they must give up the occasion, even if they suffer *great injury* from so doing, before they can be absolved, 'when no improvement, nor a probable hope of improvement, is apparent.'[1] Physical separation, he contends, is the only means of saving the soul. We must believe our Lord's words : ' If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee : it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having

[1] S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. v, n. 457.

two eyes to be cast into hell fire.' [1] And again: 'For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' [2] If, however, the penitent exhibited extraordinary signs of sorrow, S. Alphonsus would absolve, because there is real hope that improvement will follow.

The following remedies are suggested for those *in occasione necessaria*: To spend as much time as possible in prayer, to make frequent use of the sacraments, to renew daily before the crucifix one's resolution to avoid sin, to avoid being alone with the *complex*, strictly to avoid all intimacies, and to subdue the body, and strengthen the will by fasting and penitence.

A valuable warning to confessors in their treatment of the *occasionarius* is here reproduced from Schieler-Heuser, although (since public opinion does not compel our people to come to confession to fulfil an obligation) the warning is not so important for us as for confessors of the Roman Catholic Church:

P. Segneri calls attention to a double trick by which penitents try to deceive themselves and the confessor. (*a*) They are wont generally so to represent the occasion that it seems to be only a remote one, or they pretend that shunning it would cause them great difficulties, whereas there is frequently no other difficulty than that their passion finds it hard to break chains that have become dear to them. When, therefore, penitents speak of the scandal or the great injury which removing or avoiding the occasion would cause, the confessor must not be too ready to believe them, but must carefully weigh the matter, for it is one of great importance. (*b*) The second, not less dangerous, deception is that they declare themselves ready to leave the *occasio in esse*; but in reality this is only in words. When the confession is over they do not perform what they have promised to perform. I know well that many teach that the penitent can be absolved the first time if he has made the promise to discharge

[1] S. Matt xviii. 9. [2] S. Matt. xvi. 26.

his duty as soon as possible. But I repeat what I have said : As a rule do not do so, for . . . experience shows that penitents who have obtained absolution in this manner do not subsequently endeavour to break through the net of sin ; they find a hundred evasions, and before the occasion has been removed the sins have been multiplied, till, at the expiration of the year, Easter approaches, when they proceed to another confessor, who is equally imprudent. If a penitent has already deceived you or other confessors, I declare to you that on no account may you or can you give him absolution. For he is indisposed. If you, nevertheless, should believe that the present words of the penitent ought to be esteemed as of more value than his former deeds, and if, without just grounds, you hold him sufficiently disposed and worthy of absolution, listen, at least, to what I say to you : You do not act like a good confessor, and even if you fulfil the duties of the judge, you neglect the duties of the physician which are also incumbent upon you. Even if the penitent is contrite, as he seems to you to be, it is not fair to leave him in the jaws of the dragon when you can snatch him from the terrible danger of relapse by means of that remedy which is the only one against this evil—namely, by forcing him first to do that which he is bound to do, and by deferring absolution till he has done it. This just severity is still more necessary in the case of public sinners, for with these scandal is added to the sin of occasion.

HABITUAL AND RELAPSING SINNERS

The confessor has not only to deal with penitents exposed to occasions of sin, but he will also be called upon to help those unhappy souls who have contracted a habit of sin, and are constantly relapsing into it. Moral theologians distinguish between habitual and relapsing sinners. An habitual sinner (*consuetudinarius*) is one who, by repeated sinful acts of the same kind, has contracted an evil habit ; a relapsing sinner (*recidivus*) is one who, after several confessions, falls into the same sins. As explained in the preceding chapter, the confessor should spare no

pains in order to find out if a new penitent, or one making his first confession, has already contracted a habit of sin. He should also question, if necessary, so that he may have a clear idea of the nature and degree of the habit, for the more deeply rooted it is, the more care will be needed in prescribing for its eradication. If the habitual sinner is not now in an *occasio proxima,* and has the proper dispositions, the confessor would give absolution at once. Generally speaking, we need have little doubt as to the dispositions of the penitent in this case ; he does not come (as may happen in the Roman Church) because of public opinion, or to fulfil the Paschal precept ; his confession is quite voluntary, and it is only right to suppose that he intends to fight against his sinful habits in the future. The confessor would therefore exhort and encourage him to fight bravely against his sin, and prescribe the proper remedies to help him in his struggle, and then give absolution.

Recidivists are always an anxiety to a good confessor, and great skill as well as patience is required in dealing with them. Many relapsing sinners have a bad habit of constantly changing their confessor ; probably they do not clearly recognize it themselves, but their motive in so doing is to obtain absolution on easy terms. They go to one confessor for a certain time ; they accept his advice ; but the evil habit persists. He exhorts them to greater effort, or perhaps defers absolution for a time ; they are defective in purpose of amendment, not wishing to forsake their sin, and at the same time desirous of absolution ; so they change their confessor, and the same course is repeated. How dangerous and soul-destroying this method of procedure is needs no demonstration. The moral of it is that confessors should be constantly on their

guard when new penitents come to them, and be able correctly to distinguish a recidivist.

If one has reason to suspect that he is dealing with a relapsing sinner, he should first of all ask the penitent if he has already been warned by his previous confessor, what remedies the confessor advised, and if he has made use of them. It is often advisable to question the penitent as to his reason for changing his confessor, for the answer given will generally serve as an indication whether the penitent is trying to overcome his sins or not. Information must also be obtained as to the habit itself, how long it has been going on, if it has been less frequent lately, how long it has been resisted since the last confession. Did the penitent fall almost immediately after confession? Did he fight before relapsing, or was the fall after little or no struggle? This method will enable the confessor to place his penitent, and, according to the answers received, to deal with him in a proper manner. Recidivists should be urged to have a regular confessor, and any change must be strongly discouraged.

We now proceed to a consideration of the proper treatment of recidivists. Here more than anywhere else we need to steer a middle course between laxity and severity, and it must candidly be admitted that the true mean is by no means easy to find. On the one hand, undue severity will almost certainly lead the penitent to forsake the sacrament; on the other, undue laxity will encourage him to persist in his sin, and is a grave misuse of Penance. Certain laxists in the Roman Church (condemned by Innocent XI) held that a relapsing sinner could be absolved at once, even if there were no hope of amendment, provided the penitent verbally expressed his sorrow and purpose of

amendment. A certain priest was once discussing with the present author the treatment of those who constantly fall into the *vitium pollutionis*. He said : ' One can only encourage such sufferers to come regularly to their confessions, give them absolution each time, and trust that they may die in a state of grace ; when the habit is deeply rooted they cannot give it up.' Not only is this view contrary to all recognized teaching with regard to the sacrament of Penance, but it shows an appalling lack of faith in God's grace.

We have to consider under what circumstances a recidivist should be given or refused absolution. The confessor has a twofold duty to perform : he must administer the sacrament validly, and he must study the best interests of his penitent. Before absolution can be given the confessor must be satisfied that the penitent has the proper degree of purpose of amendment. This has been fully dealt with in Part II, Chapter ii, of this work. If the penitent has here and now (*hic et nunc*) sincere sorrow, and a firm resolve to amend, he can be absolved. If, however, the confessor, after taking into account previous relapses and other circumstances, is of the opinion that the penitent is not properly disposed, absolution must be deferred for a time.

In practice the golden rule is to encourage the recidivist to continue fighting against his sin. Infinite patience on the part of the confessor is necessary ; firmness combined with gentleness essential. The great enemy is despair. The penitent feels that he will never be able to overcome his sin ; he cries for peace where there can be no peace ; he often tries to cultivate an erroneous conscience, to minimize the sin, or to delude himself that in his case it is no sin. The confessor should

remind him that he is a soldier of Christ, and that in the Christian warfare he is bound to receive wounds; that the sufferings of the present time are not to be compared with the glory that awaits us, and that 'there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.'[1] It is very beneficial to defer absolution for a few days, particularly if the penitent is inclined to minimize his sin. During this period if he resists temptation—much spiritual advantage is gained, and the penitent is encouraged to go on fighting with renewed hope.

[1] 1 Cor. x. 13.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONFESSOR AS A SPIRITUAL PHYSICIAN (III)

General remedies to be prescribed—The practice of prayer and meditation—The realization of the Presence of God—The use of frequent confession—The use of frequent communion—The dispositions necessary for frequent and daily communion—The Decree of Pius X on daily communion—Giving advice on spiritual reading.

BESIDES the special remedies which may be prescribed for specific sins, as noticed in Part II, Chapter vi, there are also certain general ones which are of use for all classes of penitents and provide an antidote for all kinds of sins.

PRAYER AND MEDITATION

First amongst these is the practice of prayer and meditation. Prayer is indeed the foundation of the spiritual life, and without a well-ordered scheme of prayer a soul can hardly hope to escape a serious fall into sin, much less advance towards perfection. One would venture to suggest that the confessor should not be contented with asking his penitent if he says his prayers regularly morning and evening ; he should inquire more closely into the *method* of prayer used, and if the penitent has no definite method he should be instructed how to pray. I am afraid many of us do not realize at all how terribly mechanical and useless are the prayers of a large number of people who attend

the sacraments with regularity, and otherwise faithfully carry out their religious duties. We are surprised that they make no spiritual progress, and search for the cause in vain, while all the time the truth is that they have never been taught to pray.

The confessor should prescribe a definite rule of prayer for his penitents, suited to their individual requirements and opportunities, and it is of great importance to emphasize the need of *regularity*, quite independent of personal inclination or disinclination to pray. In the rule of prayer should be included attendance at the week-day Eucharist; it is not unjust to say that English Catholics have not yet properly realized the great value of attendance at Mass during the week. This privilege seems to be reserved for the 'better class' and the devout; the generality of the people are only expected to come on Sunday and Days of Obligation. One is tempted to believe that the fault lies with the priest, and not with his people. If we teach the great value of the daily Eucharist, and provide services to suit the convenience of the people, experience shows that the attendance will soon increase. There are few people who cannot come to Mass at least one morning in the week, and if they are taught to realize the great spiritual value of so doing they will make the necessary effort.

Meditation is also within the reach of all classes of penitents; in fact, many poorly educated and even illiterate people have a clearer understanding of the value of meditation than their better educated fellow men. Prayer and meditation in the church itself should be encouraged; this will be found to present little difficulty if the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the church.

Another valuable remedy against sin is the

cultivation of a realization of the Presence of God and the use of ejaculatory prayer. Many souls have been rescued from the captivity of sin by this means. In order to help penitents in this matter the confessor might recommend them to study the well-known little book, Brother Lawrence's *Practice of the Presence of God*, which can be obtained for a few pence.

FREQUENT CONFESSION[1]

Frequent confession[2] is also a powerful means of overcoming sin, and it is of great value to those souls aiming at perfection. The confessor, when advising frequent confession (that is, each week or fortnight), should take into account the penitent's position and circumstances, and be careful not to make too great demands upon him. When it is a case of mortal sin, one would emphasize the need of going to confession as soon as possible after the relapse has taken place. The author is convinced that the only means of overcoming the *vitium pollutionis* is by advising frequent confession.

Some priests seem to have a prejudice against frequent confession.[3] As far as one can gather, the reason is that they fear the penitent, by relying upon the confessor and the advice he gives, will lose his own independence. That this is a mistake I am firmly convinced, and believe that it arises from a confusion of the sacrament of Penance with 'spiritual talks,' and the necessity of always giving

[1] See also pp. 167–70, 181–2, 217–18.

[2] A pamphlet, *Some Difficulties in the Practice of Frequent Confession and Communion*, by the late Father W. H. Longridge, S.S.J.E., will be found valuable.

[3] Father C. Bickersteth gives the following advice: 'If a rule is asked about confession as a normal preparation for communion, provided that it is clearly understood that the penitent is left quite free, he may be encouraged to come once

advice. The object of frequent confession is to help the penitent to realize that he must rely more on God and less on himself, and to strengthen him with that divine grace which he receives in the sacrament. A good confessor would be most careful never to allow his penitent to suppose that he (the priest) was the source of help and consolation.

FREQUENT COMMUNION

Next to be considered is the use of frequent communion. The Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ is both a medicine and a food. To the soul weakened by the wounds of sin it is a great healing and strengthening medicine; it repairs the ravages of disease and fortifies in the time of future temptation. To the devout and those striving after perfection it is the heavenly Manna which effects the growth and development of the soul, as our natural food effects the growth and development of the body. It is Christ's appointed means of uniting us with Himself, so that those who partake of Him may grow more like Him. 'He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him.' The confessor may therefore advise frequent communion both for the repentant sinner, who is weak and debilitated through past sin, and for the soul striving after union with God, who hungers for the heavenly food.

There have always been differences of opinion amongst spiritual writers as to the frequency of

a year or before the great festivals, or even in some cases once a month, but certainly not before each communion, provided that he is ready to come at any time without delay, if he cannot otherwise receive with a quiet conscience.'—*The Ministry of Absolution*, p. 114. I hope I have not misunderstood him in supposing that this advice would tend to discourage frequent confession.

communion, and the dispositions necessary for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament. Those who uphold frequent [1] or even daily communion instance the daily nourishment received by the Israelites when they were fed by the manna in the desert, this 'angels' food' being, according to our Lord's own teaching, a figure of the Blessed Sacrament.[2] Moreover, our Blessed Lord taught us to pray that God might give us 'this day our daily bread'; this, according to the interpretation of by far the majority of the Fathers, refers not so much to material food as to the supernatural food of the Body and Blood of Christ. The appeal is also made to primitive Christianity, when the daily reception of communion was general.

Those who would only allow daily communion in exceptional circumstances, and frequent communion with caution, emphasize the great need of a proper disposition on the part of the recipient. The Blessed Sacrament, being what it is, can only be approached with the greatest awe and reverence. They quote S. Paul's solemn words of warning against those who would presume to receive unworthily, and hold that the sin of presumption is committed by a too frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament, unless a high spiritual standard is already arrived at.

S. Thomas Aquinas, under the question, 'Whether it is lawful to receive this sacrament daily?' states the case with his usual clearness and brevity. He says:

> There are two things to be considered regarding the use of this sacrament. The first is on the part of the sacrament

[1] By 'frequent' is understood communion at least three or four times in the week. Some writers, however, consider a weekly reception of the Blessed Sacrament to be 'frequent communion'; and S. Albert the Great designated monthly communion as 'frequent.'

[2] S. John vi. 59.

itself, the virtue of which gives health to man, and consequently it is profitable to receive it daily so as to receive its fruits daily. . . . The second thing to be considered is on the part of the recipient, who is required to approach this sacrament with great reverence and devotion. Consequently, if any one finds that he has these dispositions every day, he will do well to receive it daily. Hence, Augustine, after saying : ' Receive daily, that it may profit thee daily,' adds : ' So live, as to deserve to receive it daily.' But because many persons are lacking in this devotion, on account of the many drawbacks both spiritual and corporal from which they suffer, it is not expedient for all to approach this sacrament every day ; but they should do so as often as they find themselves properly disposed.[1]

We need not concern ourselves with the extremists on either side, ranging from those who held that it is of divine command to receive Holy Communion every day to those who exaggerated the importance of reverence to such a degree that they made it almost impossible to receive communion even at Easter.[2] We may, however, profitably consider the advice of the great spiritual writer, S. Francis de Sales. Chapter xx of the second part of his *Introduction to the Devout Life* is occupied with a consideration of the subject of frequent communion. He quotes with approval the words of S. Augustine : ' To receive the communion of the Eucharist daily, I do not praise it, neither do I condemn it ; but to communicate every Sunday, I advise it, and exhort each one to do it, provided that his spirit be without any affection of sin.' And at the end of the chapter he lays down a very definite rule as follows : ' To

[1] *Summa* III, Q. lxxx, art. 10.

[2] We would recall, in this connection, the well-known instance of the nuns of Port Royal, who, under the direction of M Arnauld, even omitted Easter communion, thus passing a whole year without communicating through reverence for the sacrament.

communicate every week, it is requisite that we have neither mortal sin nor any affection for venial sin, and have a great desire to communicate. To communicate daily, we must, in addition to this, have overcome the greater part of our evil inclinations, and be under the advice of our spiritual father.' This may be considered the general standard required, until recently, by Roman Catholic divines,[1] and our own spiritual writers in general follow S. Francis.

On December 20, 1905, Pope Pius X promulgated his famous Decree on Daily Communion, the effect of which was entirely to change existing ideas on the subject within the Roman Church, and at the same time to close the controversy. The more important clauses of this decree are here reproduced *in extenso* for the consideration of English directors.

1. ' Frequent and daily communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life, so that no one who is in a state of grace, and who approaches the holy table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.'

2. ' A right intention consists in this : that he who approaches the holy table should do so, not out of routine or vainglory or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.'

[1] Cardinal de Lugo held that daily communion is not fitted for all ' pious souls,' and Suarez—a great advocate of frequent communion—says that in only rare cases should penitents be advised to communicate daily, and, as a general rule, not more frequently than once each week.

3. 'Although it is most expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, *nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning mortally in future*; and if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves from even venial sins, and from all affection thereto.'

4. Serious preparation for, and suitable thanksgiving after, Holy Communion must be made 'according to each one's own strength, circumstances, and duties.'

5. 'That the practice of frequent and daily communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. *Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade any one* (*ne quemquam avertant*) *from frequent and daily communion, provided that he is in a state of grace, and approaches with a right intention.*'

6. Parish priests, confessors, and preachers are to exhort the faithful to practise daily communion.

7. 'Frequent and daily communion is to be promoted, especially in religious orders and congregations of all kinds. . . . It is also to be promoted especially in ecclesiastical seminaries, where students are preparing for the service of the altar; as also in all Christian establishments, of whatever kind, for the training of youth.'

8. Here follow special instructions in the case of religious institutes.

9. 'Finally, after the publication of this Decree, all ecclesiastical writers are to cease from contentious controversies concerning the disposi-

tions requisite for frequent or daily communion.' [1]

As will be seen, the author has confined himself to a simple statement of the case, preferring to leave his own personal views out of the question. He would, however, conclude with the following quotation from an address by the late Canon V. S. S. Coles, whose reputation as a spiritual director needs no emphasis :

When we seek to deal with so complex and delicate a matter as sanctification, from the moment of the blessed struggle between inclination and preventing grace, up to the glorious consummation when every thought has been fully brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and the whole will and affections are governed by the indwelling Spirit, the same creature of God, the same man, is capable of description from two points of view. He is seen as it were in two colours : hindered and helped, pitied and envied ; less than the least and not less than the greatest ; chief of sinners and first-fruits of grace ; all but and yet not really two persons. To steer the narrow course between presumption and despair in this life of the Christian is the glorious work of the divine gift of hope. Midway between faith and love, hope is above all things the virtue of growth, a pilgrimage of advancement. Here, perhaps, we touch the golden thread that shall guide us as to the relation of frequent or daily communion to venial sin. Most certainly it would be presumption to prescribe daily communion for all those who are free from deadly sin. Not less certainly, I venture to say, would it be an injury and a dishonour to hope, if we were to allow any soul free from deadly sin to lose sight of daily communion as a real and blessed aim. And here again, as we reminded ourselves that frequent communion may follow upon the shame of great and recent falls, so let us remember that it is not always the best of us who attain first to the habit of daily communion. Through outward circumstances and through inward guidance Almiggty God makes known His Will.' [2]

[1] The italics are not in the original.

[2] V. S. S. Coles, *Daily Communion*. A sermon preached before the C.B.S., June, 1907.

SPIRITUAL READING

Finally, the confessor should not neglect to direct his penitents in the important matter of spiritual reading. Personally, I am inclined to think that more harm than good is done by recommending one after another the many books of devotional reading that are at present on the market; the result is often spiritual indigestion. It seems far better, with the generality of penitents, to recommend one or two good books which should be read again and again and thoroughly mastered; the penitent will then have a sound grounding in the principles of Ascetic Theology, instead of a confused idea of 'being good,' obtained from a superficial study of many (and often inferior) books. If the reading of one or two books several times leads the penitent to complain of monotony, it may be advisable to suggest some other work which may be read as an interlude before returning to the book already studied. The author uses three books which, in his opinion, seem wonderfully suited to almost all classes of penitents; they are all well known, and have stood the test of time. First and foremost is *The Imitation of Christ*, second only to the Holy Scriptures in its wonderful spirituality; the others are Bishop Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living*, and S. Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life*. One might, in addition, recommend to those penitents who have advanced in the way of perfection Father Baker's *Holy Wisdom*, the *Treatise on the Love of God*, by S. Francis de Sales, and the works of Père J. N. Grou, especially his *Manual for Interior Souls* and *The School of Jesus Christ*.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONFESSOR AS A SPIRITUAL JUDGE

General outline of duties as judge—When the confessor is bound to give absolution—When he is bound to refuse it—When absolution should be postponed—This is sometimes necessary, sometimes beneficial—Conditional absolution—The distinction between a *conditio facti* and a *conditio juris*—Why conditional absolution is necessary—When absolution may validly be given *sub conditione*—What constitutes a just cause—With regard to the confessor—With regard to the penitent.

THE confessor, to fulfil his office of judge, must have a competent knowledge of the moral law, in order to pass sentence and to impose a penance which shall be proportionate to the evil done. He must also understand the obligation he is under to question the penitent, if he has any grounds for suspecting that the confession is not as complete as it should be. As a judge, he must be able to ascertain when the penitent has the proper dispositions for receiving absolution, and, if these dispositions are wanting, he must know how to produce them. We have treated all these subjects in some detail ; there are, however, other matters which concern the confessor in his capacity of judge, which we will now proceed to consider. These relate to the administration, deferring, or refusing of absolution, and to those cases in which conditional absolution should or may be given.[1]

[1] cp. Marc, *Instit. Moral.* §§ 1813–17. *'De obligatione dandi, vel negandi, vel differendi Absolutionem.'*

When the penitent is *certainly disposed*, he cannot be refused absolution ; and, generally speaking, the confessor would sin gravely against justice by refusing to give absolution. That this ruling is correct will easily be seen when we consider that in the sacrament of Penance the confessor acts as God's representative ; now God assures to all sinners who worthily repent the remission of their sins, and His representative must carry out the divine will. The confessor, therefore, sins against justice if he does not pronounce the sentence of acquittal which the penitent has the right to demand when properly disposed.

When the confessor is quite certain that the penitent is *indisposed*, he must refuse absolution, otherwise he would be guilty of a sacrilege. This, also, is quite plain. For, if the penitent comes to the sacrament indisposed, and the priest pronounces the words of absolution, there can be no forgiveness in heaven ; thus the sacrament is abused, and the action is consequently sinful. We have already considered the signs which indicate that the penitent is not properly disposed, and also the means to be employed in order to produce a right disposition. It is hardly necessary to emphasize the importance of the confessor using every means to make the sinner see the error of his ways, and the awful danger of his position, before finally refusing absolution. The confessor, before dismissing the penitent, would do well to tell him that he (the priest) hopes that before long, by God's mercy, he will realize the seriousness of his position ; and that when this happens he will gladly receive his confession at once, and bestow upon him the benefit of absolution.

In the case of *doubtfully disposed* penitents the rule is that absolution should be deferred ; but

for a ' grave cause ' it may be given *sub conditione*, and in some cases justice demands that it must be given. We may regard those penitents as doubtfully disposed who, having promised to perform some duty *sub gravi*, have neglected to do so ; such as making restitution, avoiding some immediate occasion of sin, giving up some vice, or becoming reconciled after a quarrel. The fact that the duty has not been performed makes it reasonable for the confessor to doubt whether the proper dispositions are present ; it does not, however, make it absolutely certain that the penitent is indisposed.

What should be done in the following case ? The confessor considers the penitent to be doubtfully disposed. The penitent, however, affirms that he has the proper dispositions, and is consequently entitled to receive absolution. The general ruling is that the confessor should give absolution *sub conditione*. In the case of dying persons who are doubtfully disposed it is quite agreed that conditional absolution should be given.

DEFERRING ABSOLUTION

Absolution may sometimes be deferred even when the penitent is properly disposed ; he certainly has the right, in justice, to absolution, but that does not mean that he has the right to be absolved *hic et nunc*. We will now consider those cases in which the postponement of absolution is either *necessary* or *beneficial*.[1]

It is *necessary* to defer absolution : (i) When the penitent has to remove a public scandal. (ii) When the penitent has been a public sinner he must first show publicly that he has amended before receiving absolution ; in some cases, how-

[1] cp. Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 411–15.

ever, where the penitent is likely to obtain spiritual benefit, absolution may be given with postponement of communion. (iii) Those penitents who have to make considerable restitution, to remove an occasion of sin, to be reconciled to an enemy, ought not to receive absolution at once. (iv) Absolution must be deferred ' with a penitent who has not confessed for a long time, has often fallen back into the old sins, and has not so far employed any diligence in the examination of his conscience ; for in this case he runs great risk (as, by his own fault, the declaration of his sins is incomplete) of being invalidly absolved. But if such a penitent does not know how to examine his conscience better, the confessor must aid him, and absolve him if he considers him otherwise capable and worthy of it.' [1]

To defer absolution is sometimes *beneficial* to the penitent even when he seems properly disposed. This is particularly the case when the withholding of absolution will help him to recognize the seriousness of his sin, and the need of real effort to amend. No particular rule can be laid down for the confessor's guidance in this matter. His sole object in deferring absolution should be the ultimate good of the penitent, and if he is of the opinion that a greater benefit would come by withholding absolution than by giving it, he would be entitled to follow this course, for he is administering a sacrament under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Absolution should not be withheld for any great length of time—three, five, or eight days are usually suggested. Schieler-Heuser has the following warning :

> The confessor must not postpone absolution when postponement is hurtful to the penitent, and this is the case when Holy Communion cannot be omitted without exciting

[1] Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, p. 411.

remark: . . when the danger is foreseen that the penitent would be obliged to confess the same sins to another confessor, which would be an unfair burden; or when the penitent, by this proceeding, would be exposed to the risk of dying without absolution; or if he could not come again for a long time.

CONDITIONAL ABSOLUTION

It now remains to consider the subject of conditional absolution. Absolution given *sub conditione* consists in the minister adding some condition, such as 'if thou art baptized,' to the form of the sacrament. All theologians are agreed that for serious reasons the sacraments may be given conditionally, and in certain cases must be so administered. We have now to consider if it is valid to administer penance *sub conditione*, and, if so, under what circumstances should it be administered.

Many theologians drew a distinction between a *conditio facti* and a *conditio juris*; the former they allowed, saying it was lawful to administer absolution under a condition with regard to a fact, such as 'if thou art alive'; the latter (i.e. administering absolution with regard to law under such conditions as 'if thou art disposed'), they contended, was contrary to the judicial character of the sacrament. This distinction is considered to be beside the point by the majority of theologians, including, I believe, most, if not all, modern ones. They point out that the priest's sentence, even when given in absolute form, is really conditional, since it depends for its ratification upon conditions known only to God. Moreover, as Lehmkuhl says, in a civil court the judge will give sentence under such conditions as 'if payment be not made by such a date.' [1]

[1] *Theol. Moral.* II, n. 272. cp. J. P Gury, *Compendium Theologiae Moralis*, II, n. 432.

The need for administering the sacrament of Penance conditionally will be seen when we consider the position of the priest, not only as the minister, but also as the guardian of the sacrament. On the one hand, he is bound by the nature of his sacred office to administer the sacrament to his people, and, if he neglects to do so, cannot be excused from grave sin; on the other, he must take care to guard the sacrament, as far as lies in his power, from all irreverence and profanation.

Now, take the case of a dying person whose dispositions the priest has reason to doubt; if conditional absolution cannot be used he is faced with a serious dilemma. As the minister of the sacrament, he ought not to let the person die without the benefit of absolution; the person *may* have proper dispositions, however black the case appears against him. On the other hand, if he gives absolution in such a case unconditionally he is in great danger of abusing his position as the guardian of the sacrament. By giving conditional absolution he is able to bestow upon the penitent the grace of the sacrament if he does happen to have the proper dispositions, and at the same time he guards the sacrament against profanation if the penitent is not properly disposed. It seems a weak argument to say, 'We need not worry ourselves about such details, we can leave it to God.' Surely this shows a lack of appreciation of the great responsibility placed upon the priest; the sacraments are Holy Things, and reverence demands that we should take the utmost care in administering those wonderful and sacred powers which God committed to us at our ordination to the priesthood. If an earthly steward is bound to realize the responsibility and duties of his stewardship,

how much more the steward and minister of the Mysteries of God !

It is, therefore, accepted that absolution may be given validly *sub conditione*; the condition must, however, be *de praesenti* or *de praeterito*, for then the intention is absolute if the condition is fulfilled ; if it is not, the intention to administer the sacrament is lacking, and there is no danger of irreverence.[1] Absolution cannot be given under a *conditio de futuro*, since the priest would then have no intention of conferring the sacrament *hic et nunc* ; his intention would rather be to confer the sacrament when the condition will have been fulfilled. By this time, however, the matter is no longer present which, for the validity of the sacrament, must be joined to the form.[2] The following illustrations will make the point in question clear : It is valid to absolve with the following conditions : ' If thou art baptized,' ' if thou art alive,' ' if thou art present ' ; it is invalid to absolve with such conditions as ' if thou art going to improve,' ' if thou art predestined,' ' if within a month thou makest restitution.' [3]

It is also lawful to give conditional absolution when there is a *just cause* for so doing ; and in case of necessity the priest is bound to give absolution *sub conditione*. It is important to understand clearly what is meant by a *just cause* ; and what has been said previously with regard to the priest's duties, both as the minister and guardian of the sacrament, will help in this respect. From these

[1] Marc, *Instit. Moral.* § 1663.

[2] Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, p. 63.

[3] The following are some of the authors consulted with regard to the above : S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. v, n. 25 ; also Lib. v, nn. 431, 432 ; Marc, *Instit. Moral.* § 1663, § 1830 fin., § 1855 ; also Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 59–69.

considerations it will be seen that we cannot, on the one hand, admit any insignificant reason to be sufficient for administering the sacrament subject to a condition, nor, on the other, can we agree that it should only be given in cases of great danger or extreme necessity. A *just cause*, therefore, would be one in which to give unconditional absolution would expose the sacrament to danger of profanation, and to withhold absolution would cause the penitent to be in real spiritual danger. This just cause may be either on the side of the confessor or on the side of the penitent.[1] We will consider both cases.

With regard to the confessor: (i) When he is in doubt as to whether he has given absolution or not, he should absolve *sub conditione* as follows: 'If thou art not already absolved,' etc. (ii) When he is in doubt as to whether the penitent is alive or dead, he should add the condition 'if thou art alive' to the form of the sacrament. (iii) Conditional absolution should be given when the confessor is in doubt whether the penitent is morally present.[2]

[1] Marc, *Instit. Moral.* § 1663.

[2] Although the question of the jurisdiction of the priest in hearing confessions is not dealt with in this work, for the sake of completeness we consider the case in which the priest is in doubt whether he has jurisdiction or not. When the doubt relates to the fact of his having jurisdiction (*in dubio facti*)—i.e. whether he has recovered jurisdiction from the Ordinary, or whether that jurisdiction has been withdrawn—the confessor should absolve *sub conditione* as follows: 'If I am able, I absolve thee,' etc. At the same time, he should tell the penitent that he has only given conditional absolution, so that, if it is discovered afterwards that the priest has no jurisdiction, the penitent will understand that he has not received absolution, and must repeat his confession. If the doubt rests upon a question of law (*in dubio juris*)—that is, where authors are not agreed whether absolution may be given in that particular case—unconditional absolution may be given.

With regard to the penitent: (i) When the priest doubts that the penitent has the proper dispositions, he should give absolution *sub conditione* in cases of urgent necessity—i.e. when the penitent is in danger of death. (ii) He should also give conditional absolution when the penitent is honestly convinced that he has the proper dispositions, and when the confessor has reason to fear that, if he denies absolution, the penitent will receive some other sacrament, such as marriage, in an unworthy state, or, by the refusal of absolution, be repelled from the sacraments or alienated from the Church. (iii) When the confessor is in doubt as to the sufficiency of the *matter*, he may give conditional absolution. This may happen when the penitent receives conditional Baptism, and is to be absolved at the same time; or when he only discloses certain imperfections of which it is doubtful whether they are even venial sins. (iv) Children, and feeble-minded persons of whom it is doubtful whether they possess sufficient use of reason, or have a sufficient knowledge of the essential truths of the Faith, may be absolved conditionally, not only when in danger of death, but also to fulfil the precept of the Church. The confessor should, however, use great diligence in order that, as much as possible, they may be well instructed, and rightly disposed.[1]

[1] Marc, *Instit. Moral.* § 1663.

PART V

THE TREATMENT OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF PENITENTS

CHAPTER I

THE CONFESSIONS OF ADULTS

Attention must be paid to the penitent's Rule of Life—Advice as to frequency of confession and communion—The need of a correct deportment in hearing confessions—Slang expressions and familiarity to be avoided—Direction need not always be given—The treatment of male penitents—Suggestions on how to prepare men for confession—The standard to be aimed at in the spiritual direction of men—Precautions to be observed in hearing women's confessions—The question of contraceptives.

CLASSIFICATION is always a matter of great difficulty in whatever connection it is used; and in the present instance, where we endeavour to group together individuals into convenient classes for the guidance of the confessor, we can hardly avoid certain inconvenience by overlapping. Our present subject, the confessions of adults, can obviously be sub-divided almost indefinitely, for the ordinary parish priest (like the ordinary medical practitioner) has to deal with the most varied classes of adults. Our remarks will, therefore, be upon quite general lines, and we shall strive, as much as possible, to avoid repetition of what has previously been said in this volume.

In the generality of confessions the chief task of the confessor is to keep his penitents regular in the performance of their religious duties, to encourage them, and to safeguard them from a tendency to laxity, and to watch over their spiritual progress with great care, so that they may not rest con-

tented with the standard to which they have already attained, but strive after a higher state of spirituality. In order to do this effectually he should hear their confessions with the greatest attention, and be prepared to reprove, gently but firmly, if he finds the penitent is not striving to make any progress. The penitent should be instructed always to mention, before beginning his confession, the last time he made use of the sacrament; such information is necessary to the confessor both in his position as spiritual judge and also in that of spiritual physician.

When the confessor has reason to suppose that the penitent has not kept his rule, but has delayed coming to the sacrament, he should inquire into the reason of the delay. Quite apart from everything else, if this is done systematically with all penitents, it will impress upon them the fact that the confessor expects regularity, and will thus help to prevent a tendency to laxity. If the confession has been delayed it is reasonable to suspect that other religious duties will not have been properly performed, and the confessor would do well to inquire how often the penitent has received communion since his last confession; and also (if it has not been stated in the confession itself) if there has been laxity in attendance at the Sunday Eucharist, etc.

When this inquiry results in the discovery that the penitent has been in a greater or lesser degree neglecting to observe his rule of life, the confessor should proceed to encourage him to begin again. It is often very beneficial, if the rule has been seriously neglected, to suggest that the penitent, for a time at any rate, should form a new rule of less strictness, impressing upon him that it is better to keep a simple rule well than a more

elaborate one badly. By this means penitents will learn that rules are not made to be broken but to be kept, and experience shows, when this plan is adopted, after a year or so, the penitents realize in a very satisfactory manner that their religious life is not a matter of personal inclination and desire, but of obligation, just as their business duties are of obligation if they wish to have any measure of success.

Penitents need care and attention with regard to the frequency of their communions, since this is the most powerful aid to a deeper spirituality. Those who accept *in toto* the pronouncement of Pius X will, of course, strongly advocate even daily communion to those of their penitents who have the dispositions required by the Decree. But one would presume to warn them that before doing so they should carefully consider the fact that conditions are somewhat different in the Roman Church from what they are with us, and that they must be prepared to face this, and to take great care that their advice does not lead to any lowering or even profanation of the sacrament of the altar.

The method adopted by the author is as follows : He gives each of his penitents a definite rule with regard to confession and communion (the penitent, of course, being carefully considered and consulted in the formation of the rule) ; this, to begin with, is generally confession and communion once every month. If this rule is kept for some little time, and the penitent is found to be sincere in his faith, and desirous of progressing, fortnightly confession and communion are suggested. Then follows, perhaps as a Lent rule, attendance at Mass once, twice, or even more, according to the circumstances of the penitent, during the week, and communion every Sunday, the confessions being made each fortnight

as before. The penitent is also carefully instructed that if on examination of conscience mortal sin is found to have been committed, use should be made of the sacrament of Penance before reception of the Blessed Sacrament. When this rule has been observed for a time, the penitent is instructed on the great spiritual benefit to be derived from frequent communion, and the desirability of aiming ultimately at daily communion, and he is advised to communicate two, three, or four times each week, according to individual circumstances. At the same time weekly confession is advised, if circumstances are favourable. With those who communicate daily, weekly confession is the general rule. The plan here laid down is, of course, of the most general kind, and furnishes only a broad working principle; numerous exceptions occur in actual practice, and it has constantly to be modified according to the individual penitent.

THE RULE OF LIFE

It may not be inappropriate at this stage to consider in general terms the whole question of the justification for a rule of life, since many people view with considerable suspicion the ideas connoted by the words 'obligation' and 'rule.' Let us begin by asking what it is that prompts us to devise certain rules of conduct. There seems to be only one possible answer; that we are dissatisfied with our present mode of conduct, and that our conscience is bidding us effect a reformation of our character. But this raises a further question: What do you mean by conscience?

Psychologists have lately interested themselves in this matter and have evolved a theory of conscience which at least demands consideration. They would identify conscience with the ego-ideal.

The conscientious person, therefore, is he who has lofty moral ideals, while 'the man without a conscience' is he who is lacking in ideals. Now we must frankly admit that for many people this description of conscience is adequate, it fits them exactly. But it is also obvious that if it is accepted as a universal hypothesis, conscience becomes something entirely subjective and differs with each individual. It ceases to be an entity. Furthermore, the individual conception of 'good' and 'bad' is relative, not absolute. W. S. Gilbert recognized this before the advent of the new psychology, and was thus able to write :

> When a felon's not engaged in his employment
> Or maturing his felonious little plans,
> His capacity for innocent enjoyment
> Is just as great as any honest man's.

Such a view of conscience could never be accepted by the Christian moralist. It cuts right at the root of our conception of moral values. But in spite of this it need not be rejected altogether. We can readily admit that there is a direct relation between the conscience and the ideal. What we must insist upon is that this ideal is not subjective (i.e. an ego-ideal) but objective. The Christian moral ideal is an absolute value which has been revealed to us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and preserved and upheld in His Church. The true conscience, therefore, is that which recognizes this ideal and strives to conform to it.

We can now see quite clearly that when the Christian ideal is accepted the translation of that ideal into action must involve not only a struggle, but also certain definite and practical precautions to ensure its realization. In other words, we must make some serious attempt at self-discipline ; and

experience has proved that self-discipline can best be effected by the observance of a carefully formulated rule of life. It is quite true that the road to hell is paved with sporadic and futile resolves to do better in the future ; but it is equally true that the road to heaven is to be found in a well-disciplined and well-regulated life.

When it is admitted that some rule of life is essential for our spiritual well-being, the further contention, that its precise formulation and its relative position in our lives are of equal importance, must be considered. And here I would state categorically that a rule of life must never be considered as an end in itself. There is always a danger of this happening, particularly with persons who are naturally of a methodical type of mind. They become obsessed by their rule, and when circumstances arise which make a change in the rule or a modification of it necessary, their whole spiritual life is in danger of falling to pieces. This slavery to the letter of a rule inevitably tends to develop a legalistic and pharisaic attitude towards religion which is quite contrary to the Spirit of Christ. The victim is hobbling about on crutches all the time, and when his props are knocked away he falls helplessly to the ground.

A successful rule of life is always a means to an end, never an end in itself. It may, then, be likened to the buoys which mark the entrance to a river ; the navigator knows that while he keeps within the fairway thus marked out for him he is safe, but let him once get out of it, he is in danger of grounding on the shoals and sand-banks. A wisely chosen rule keeps us in the fairway of the spiritual life, our past experience of failure has shown us where the sand-banks lie, and so we map out a chart which will ensure safe progress.

Such, then, is the relative position that the rule should occupy in one's daily life. What are we to say concerning its precise formulation? Here I would supplement what has already been said in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, where it was assumed that the rule had already been made. The confessor should be aware of the type of person who considers that a rule of life, in order to be effective, must be very complicated and elaborate; such persons imagine that unless they have a very hard rule they are not exercising proper self-discipline. But it almost invariably happens that this strict rule is never kept in its entirety, and the maker of it has to record daily a succession of failures. This state of affairs produces a very bad effect both psychologically and spiritually. A continuous mental conflict is set up which produces a despondency of mind and a weariness of spirit which is liable to end in the total inertia of despair.

In the face of this fact, proved beyond all dispute by the appeal to experience, I would venture to repeat with emphasis that the rule of life should always be as simple as possible. When we attempt to formulate a system of self-discipline, either for ourselves, or as the advisers of our penitents, we ought to begin by giving serious consideration to particular circumstances, and no rule should receive solemn assent unless the one who makes it can say *ex animo* that it is one which can be kept in its entirety. It is no doubt very inspiring to resolve that we will spend two hours each day in meditation; but it may well happen that our circumstances make such a resolution quite impossible to keep, or, what is even more probable, that our spiritual condition may be such that we are incapable of such concentrated spiritual effort. A

rule of life which is going to be a help and not a hindrance to spiritual development must be modest in its aim, adapted to the temporal and spiritual state of the one who undertakes it, and free from burdensome restrictions.

It may be objected that this line of reasoning, if accepted, would result in a relaxation of the Christian ideal; and I introduce the objection because it is both very prevalent and very dangerous. It is based upon the mistaken identification of the rule of life with the spiritual ideal, and thus it makes the former an end in itself. This view is dangerous because, when it is accepted, the rule becomes nothing more nor less than the 'ego-ideal' of the psychologists; that is, it is a subjective standard of morality chosen by the individual himself. And, as I have already stated, this view is incompatible with the objective character of Christian morality.

We must therefore make a clear distinction between the spiritual ideal our Lord has revealed to us, and those detailed rules which we make for ourselves as an aid to the attainment of that ideal. The ethical revelation of Christ is essentially a call to perfection; it is absolute, and never varies. Furthermore, it demands on our part a certain attitude of mind which is affective, that is emotional, rather than intellectual. Christ requires of us that we should be in love with goodness for its own sake; that is, we must be in love with God. A rule of life, on the other hand, is not primarily an emotional adventure, it is rather a calculated and reasoned method by which we seek to guard ourselves against falling away from the high ideal which is set before us. When these distinctions are understood there is no danger of the penitent regarding his rule of life as an end in itself.

THE DEPORTMENT OF THE CONFESSOR

Our next consideration must be that of the deportment of the priest in hearing confessions, and its importance can hardly be over-emphasized. A medical student, during his training, receives instructions on how to behave himself in a professional manner; it is much to be desired that ordinands should receive a like instruction. Perhaps, with the exception of his conduct in the sick-room, of which we shall be writing later, there is no time when it is so necessary for the priest to be strictly professional as when hearing confessions. He should be most careful in his deportment when administering the sacrament of Penance. We have already noticed certain things which must be avoided, such as looking directly at the penitent; we may also consider certain matters on the positive side. The priest should be dignified, and yet modest in his bearing, and should exercise quite definitely, but without presumption, the authority which belongs to his office. The penitent calls him 'Father,' and this title he should value highly. It is not advisable for a young priest to address his penitents in confession as 'my child,' particularly if they are much older than himself; such a proceeding would probably only irritate the penitent, and would lay the priest under suspicion that he was suffering from an unbalanced idea of his position, and consequently would not tend to the edification of the faithful. He should, however, remember that he is really and truly a spiritual father, and the recognition of this ought to make him humble, and most desirous of qualifying himself for such a position of responsibility, rather than have the opposite effect of filling him with pride and making him presume upon his

position. There is nothing more delightful and edifying than to see a whole congregation recognizing the spiritual fatherhood of their priests, and addressing them by the title ' Father,' without any affectation, and in a perfectly natural manner. On the other hand, there is nothing more offensive and irritating than the young cleric, who has not yet worn out his first cassock and biretta, designating all and sundry (despite the fact that they may be, and often are, his spiritual superiors) as ' awful Protestants,' because they will not employ the title ' Father ' in every other sentence they use when speaking to him.

When giving advice in the confessional the priest should be careful in his choice of words. All suspicion of slang should be avoided, and the use of colloquial expressions is generally to be condemned. We must remember that we are administering a sacrament, not having a talk with the penitent for his good ; and, consequently, the dignity and sanctity of the sacrament must be maintained. Also there must be no suspicion of familiarity ; the penitent should never be addressed by his name, and when the confessor feels it his duty to encourage him he should be careful to do it in as impersonal a manner as possible, so avoiding the introduction of any idea of flattery. We ought not to let penitents think that we personally are pleased with their progress ; everything must be referred to God. The confessor should also take care to confine his remarks to specific matters mentioned in the confession, and refuse to be led into a more or less desultory conversation about spiritual things in general. He should avoid, particularly with women, undue length in giving advice ; he should be brief, clear, and to the point, and quite firmly refuse to be drawn into a lengthy discussion or conversation.

It is not necessary for the confessor to offer advice to the penitent every time he comes to his confession ; and it should be recognized that the deliberate manufacturing of advice for the sake of saying something is not only futile, but sometimes positively harmful. To refrain from giving advice does not indicate either that the confessor feels himself incompetent to give it, or that he does not understand his penitent ; on the contrary, it generally demonstrates his great wisdom. In the case of those who make frequent confessions the confessor will often find that no advice is needed, and, after a word of encouragement (if he considers even this to be necessary), he will at once proceed to set a suitable penance, and pronounce absolution. With occasional penitents, and by this is meant those who come to one now and again, when their regular director is away from home, the confessor should be very careful indeed about giving advice. Under ordinary circumstances there will be no need for him to do so, and in any case he should not interfere with the penitent's rule of life, or suggest things which might be contrary to the advice given by his regular director. We would repeat the warning that the confessor should be on his guard with regard to recidivists when receiving the confessions of occasional penitents.

Nor is the confessional an appropriate place for the delivery of a short homily to the penitent ; indeed this procedure is often simply a convenient method of disguising the confessor's incompetence.

One has heard of cases where the Sunday sermon is practically anticipated by the penitent who goes to confession on Saturday night. So possessed was the confessor by the mischievous idea that he must say something, that, having nothing in particular suggested by the needs of the penitent, he could only speak of what was occupying his mind before

entering the tribunal. He had better far set a penance, give absolution, and keep his sermon for the proper time and place.[1]

CONFESSIONS OF MEN

We will now consider the treatment the confessor should adopt in hearing the confessions of men penitents. All writers recognize the fact that it is far more difficult to get men to approach the sacrament of Penance than women. Roman Catholic authors, as far as I know, unanimously advise the confessor to be very lenient and considerate towards men. Frassinetti,[2] in dealing with the subject, gives the following advice :

> The second point to be remembered is to receive them, not only with unvarying kindness, but even with a pleased and joyous manner, as if, in fact, the Parish Priest looked upon it as a privilege and a most delightful occupation to hear their confessions. Even though they should belong to the lowest order, he must invariably speak to them with the greatest kindness and affection ; for by this means a favourable impression is made upon them ; they are disposed to confess well, and to approach the sacraments more frequently in the future.

The authors of *The Theory and Practice of the Confessional* base their advice on this subject upon Frassinetti, and agree with him in urging confessors to be very lenient with men. The same holds in our own communion ; the great question is how to draw the men ? And most people are agreed that we must be very kind and considerate in our dealings with them. Personally, I very much doubt if this is the proper way to deal with men. It is almost invariably a bad thing to ' fuss ' people, be they men, women, or children ; a little straight talking is far more effective than a great

[1] A. H. Baverstock, *The Priest as Confessor*, 2nd ed., p. 73.
[2] J. Frassinetti, *The New Parish Priest's Practical Manual*, p. 359.

amount of so-called consideration and fuss. A great friend of mine once wrote an article for his Parish Magazine entitled 'The Church and the Men'; it so thoroughly expresses my own views on the matter that I reproduce it almost verbatim. He says:

'How is the Church to get the men?' is a very common question in the Press to-day; and 'Why don't the working-men go to church?' is an unceasingly popular discussion in our papers. Almost always the various reasons try to find something wrong with the Church to account for the matter. I, personally, have always felt that there is quite another side of the question, and that something is really very radically wrong with the men. The greatest mistake the Church has made in the matter seems to me that she has treated the men as if they were quite different from the rest of mortals, and has pandered to them in the most hopeless way, by flattery and wiles, in order to get them into the Church. First, she has gone to the man on bended knee and told him how sorry she is that she does not suit him, and what alterations would he like. Then, she has dwelt on the impossibility of getting on without him, and has spread all sorts of cunning baits in his way; such as dominoes, bagatelle, whist-drives, and smoking concerts. And all the time the British man has been laughing in his sleeve. He, himself, knows perfectly well (for he is quite an honest, frank, and charming fraud) that the real reason why he does not go to church is because he is too lazy either to think or get up in time; and also because he is very often too much of a coward to face the music at his factory or workshop.

What he really wants said to him is how much *he* is in need of the Church's privileges, and how, while the Church can get on very well without him, he cannot get on without the Church. The hymn for modern Men's Services is not 'Fight the good fight,' but 'We are but little children weak.' What the British man wants is not dominoes and bagatelle, but a good straight talk about his soul, repentance, heaven, and hell. He must learn, not how much the Church can do for him in concerts and whist-drives, but how much he ought to do for the Church in the way of good hard work and good hard prayer. You will never convert the British man by coming to him with an invitation to a free 'smoker,' with songs less vulgar than the music-hall and duller than the effusions which

are sung at an old maids' tea-party. You *may* convert him if you show him half-a-dozen dirty hassocks, and say, 'Dust these, you lazy fellow, and do something to get your living in the Church.' This treatment would, perhaps, at first annoy, and most certainly astonish the British man, but he would at any rate realize that it was honest and the truth.

No one more than himself has marvelled at the idol the Church has made of him. He himself knows that he is a 'bit of a rotter,' but he has felt bound to play up to the Church's method. 'They carn't get on without me, carn't they?' he says; 'well, I'll give them a good run for their money!' After all, the man is right; if we are so foolish as to treat him like this, we deserve to get some trouble for our folly. . . . If only the Church will realize the riches she has to offer, the riches of Christ, the dignity of being a member of His Body, men will respect her, and not confound her with those who canvass for attendance after the manner of an electioneering tout. Let us here, in this parish, as, thank God, so many are doing, set an example of men serving the Church humbly, thankfully, and enthusiastically. Then we shall cease to be bothered by the question, 'Why don't men come to church?' and all the humiliating paraphernalia of cheap baits for cheap men, such as whist-drives, and brief, bright, brotherly, and vulgar Men's services.[1]

Although the above was not written with confession particularly in mind, yet it holds good in respect to that also. Priests often lament that they cannot get their men to confession. One is inclined to think that the real cause is because they are rather afraid to approach them openly on the subject. They tacitly assume that men will not come, so why engage upon a hopeless task? When preparing men for the sacrament of confirmation, the author always takes them individually when dealing with the subject of Penance. He gives at least three, and sometimes four, instructions on the subject, and encourages the ventilation of objections, etc. Also when he has new people come to

[1] This extract is taken from *S. Patrick's Parish Magazine*, Birmingham, for June, 1911, and was written by the Rev. W. E. Bell.

his church, who have not previously had thorough Catholic teaching, he takes the opportunity (as soon as they have quite settled down) to invite them to receive a course of instruction on Penance. He is careful to tell them that they will be under no obligation to him, at the end of the course, if they conscientiously feel that they ought not to make their confession. This plan hardly ever fails.

The great thing in teaching men about Penance is to be *logical*, and *direct to the point*. Women are, as a class, appealed to through the emotions, logic is not of great value ; but once convince a man intellectually, and appeal to him to do what he knows to be *right*, no matter what the consequences may be, if he is really a sincere Christian he will do what is required. One would urge priests, adopting this suggestion, to prepare their instructions very carefully, so as to have all their arguments clearly in mind. When some difficult objection is brought forward, one should not hesitate to postpone an answer until the next instruction, so that there may be an opportunity of thoroughly mastering the objection in question. Even if the man does not come to his confession one's time will not have been wasted, for he will at least realize that we are in earnest ourselves, and will withdraw all active opposition to the preaching and teaching of Penance.

It is quite true that it is much harder to get men to practise frequent confession than women, and the confessor will bear this in mind when advising on the subject. If, however, men are properly instructed at first, there is little difficulty in getting them to come once in each month, and quite a large number will come fortnightly if properly treated. Frassinetti is quite right when he advises confessors not to keep men penitents waiting long ; they are

naturally more impatient than women, and often have less time at their disposal. In fact, one feels certain that one reason why priests fail to get men to frequent confession is because they take up so much time giving advice to pious females that the men make the long wait an excuse for staying away from the sacrament.

We must also realize that, in general, men have not such a strong realization of sin as women have, and consequently they do not feel such a need for frequent confession. The man's daily occupation in the world, modern business methods, and many other circumstances tend to blunt the conscience, and make at least venial sins appear of little moment ; consequently it is much harder to lead men to perfection.

Despite a full recognition of this fact, I can hardly agree with Frassinetti when he says :

> The parish priest should guard himself against suggesting to penitents of this class rules of perfection which would be neither appreciated nor understood by them. Let him, as a general rule, content himself with instilling into their hearts a hatred of mortal sin, and inculcating the observance of the Commandments, dealing with them all the while in a frank, open, indulgent, and kind manner. It is necessary to do this in order that they may not come to regard him as a sour ascetic, and shrink from returning to his confessional.[1]

Admittedly it would be wrong to try to inculcate rules of perfection while mortal sin had dominion over the soul, but many men do not commit habitual mortal sin, and only sin mortally at more or less rare intervals. These should surely be advised to strive after perfection, and, one may reasonably hope, would, by God's grace, continue to progress in virtue.

Finally, before leaving the subject of men's con-

[1] *Parish Priest's Manual*, p. 360.

fessions, one would suggest a general rule. Expect much from your men, and let them know you expect it. Do not treat them as if they were some extraordinary beings, but simply men. Do not, however, be in the least disappointed if they do not rise to your ideal. Above all things, never be afraid of them. Treat them in a perfectly straightforward manner ; let them know your convictions in such a manner that there can be no doubt on the subject. Then you may be certain that, even if they disagree with you, you will have earned their respect, and they will appreciate your efforts on their behalf.

CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN

We have already indicated the precautions that should be taken in hearing the confessions of women.[1] We would like to point out, in addition, the inadvisability of a priest hearing the confessions of his own domestic servants. It will easily be seen that to do so might prove a temptation to the penitent to conceal certain sins—in particular that of stealing, and such sins as she might consider would tend to lower her in the estimation of her employer. A priest should also, if possible, refrain from hearing the confessions of his personal friends. One is aware that sometimes, particularly in country parishes, it is difficult for parishioners to go elsewhere for their confessions, but if it can be arranged it seems best for the penitent to confess to some other priest.

THE QUESTION OF CONTRACEPTIVES

The wide publicity which has been given, in recent years, to the practice of birth prevention

[1] See p. 109.

by the use of contraceptive devices, and the change that has taken place in public opinion regarding the whole question, necessitates some reference being made to the subject in a book such as this. It seems quite evident that the problem we have to face is not, as many of our religious leaders seem to suppose, that of the 'hard case'; but the deliberate spacing and limitation of the family by married couples. It may be well to try and understand how this state of affairs has come about, so that it may be met effectively when it appears in the confessional.

Owing to the increasing demands of our present day civilization upon the individual, the more or less regular arrival of children means ever-increasing responsibilities, there must be self-denial exercised with regard to recreations and luxuries, and sometimes even hardship and comparative poverty have to be faced. The young people of the present generation, or at least those who are only nominally Christian, are reluctant to accept these limitations. They refuse to see that self-denial is the great formative element in character building, and they are entirely out of sympathy with the sterner side of the Christian ethic. They ignore the fact that the Christian life is essentially *simple*, and that its needs as well as its luxuries should be considered few. They accept the life of our modern civilization, which is extraordinarily *complex*, and it is the attempt to live this life of complexity, with its exorbitant demands upon time, money, and energy, which brings the inevitable result of family limitation.

The Catholic Church has always been unwavering in her affirmation of the sacred character of the marriage bond, and has never admitted the right of married persons deliberately to employ means

for the restriction and limitation of their families. Mr. Walter Lippmann, an independent observer and a non-Christian, has stated very truly that ' whether or not birth control is eugenic, hygienic, and economic, it is the most revolutionary practice in the history of sexual morals.' [1] Nor do we think it ought to be too hastily assumed that conscientious Christians have surrendered their convictions to popular opinion and the demands of our civilization. It is impossible to speak with absolute certainty on a matter such as this, but evidence is not wanting that the birth prevention movement has definite restrictions. Dr. R. A. Fisher, who writes with authority, states that ' the response of the public to [birth prevention propaganda] is certainly slackening, and that although the economic burden of children is as heavy as ever, and the present time is not one of especial national prosperity. It looks as though the campaign had reached the limit of its effectiveness because it has already—as far as they can be influenced—influenced all who can and will comply with these practices.' [2]

The duty of the confessor is perfectly plain and straightforward in those cases where the penitent confesses that he has employed means for the prevention of conception. The penitent must promise that he will abstain from these practices in the future, and, if it happens that he expresses a doubt as to whether it is sinful to use these means, the confessor should be prepared to instruct his conscience either during the confession, or at a more convenient time. When the penitent, in spite of instruction and exhortation, persists in the practice, and mentions it again and again in confession

[1] *A Preface to Morals*, p. 291
[2] *The Listener*, Dec. 10, 1930, p. 979.

with apparently little or no effort at amendment, he will then have to be dealt with according to the rules laid down in the chapter on recidivists.

Both the Lambeth Conference of 1920 and that of 1930 discussed the question of conception control, and since there are important differences in the views expressed by these Conferences it may be well to reproduce the relevant resolutions *in extenso*. The Conference of 1920 definitely refused to consider the so-called ' hard case ' in detail, and simply delivered a general condemnation of all contraceptive control methods. The Resolution (68) reads as follows :

> The Conference, while declining to lay down rules which will meet the needs of every abnormal case, regards with grave concern the spread in modern society of theories and practices hostile to the family. We utter an emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception, together with the grave dangers—physical, moral, and religious—thereby incurred, and against the evils with which the extension of such use threatens the race. In opposition to the teaching which, under the name of science and religion, encourages married people in the deliberate cultivation of sexual union as an end in itself, we steadfastly uphold what must always be regarded as the governing considerations of Christian marriage. One is the primary purpose for which marriage exists—namely the continuation of the race through the gift and heritage of children ; the other is the paramount importance in married life of deliberate and thoughtful self-control. We desire solemnly to commend what we have said to Christian people and to all who will hear.

The Conference of 1930, however, admitted, with certain safeguards, a restricted use of contraceptives amongst married people. The important resolution is number 15, but Resolutions 13–18 are all relevant, and some notice must be taken of them here. Resolutions 13 and 14 emphasize the dignity and glory of parenthood, and the necessity for self-control within marriage, thus following the

latter part of the 1920 pronouncements. Resolution 16 condemns the crime of abortion, and Resolution 17 repudiates the ideas we have already criticized that our present unsatisfactory social and economic conditions can be met by the spacing and regulation of families. Resolution 18 condemns fornication accompanied by the use of contraceptives, as no less sinful than without such accompaniment; and it demands further that legislation should be undertaken forbidding the exposure for sale and advertisement of contraceptives. The full text of Resolution 15 is as follows:

> When there is a clearly-felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, the method must be decided on Christian principles. The primary and obvious method is complete abstinence from intercourse (as far as may be necessary) in a life of discipline and self-control lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless in those cases where there is such a clearly-felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and where there is a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence, the Conference agrees that other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of the same Christian principles. The Conference records its strong condemnation of the use of any methods of conception-control from motives of selfishness, luxury, or mere convenience.[1]

A full discussion of the meaning and implications of this resolution would only be appropriate in a text-book of Moral Theology; a manual for the practical guidance of confessors must be limited by its terms of reference, and no detailed discussions of fundamental moral problems can be attempted.[2] All that can be done here is to consider what influence, if any, this resolution may

[1] *Lambeth Conference Report*, 1930, p. 43. This resolution was carried by 193 votes to 67.

[2] A review of the whole controversy, and a guide to the literature to date, will be found in the *Syllabus of the Society of Sacred Study*, April, 1931 The article is contributed by the writer of this volume.

have upon our action in administering the sacrament of Penance. Dr. K. E. Kirk has submitted Resolution 15 to a detailed and critical examination, and no confessor can afford to ignore the weighty pronouncement he has made.[1] Dr. Kirk comments upon the inexplicable silence of the bishops with reference to their Resolution (68) on birth-control in the Conference of 1920, and asks if the present resolutions are to be read in the light of that one, or are we to regard the 1920 resolution as tacitly dropped, so that the present pronouncements represent something of a *volte face*?

'On all these points,' he continues, 'the reader is met with silence. In the light of these and similar omissions the Lambeth pronouncements cannot claim to be either coherent or scientific. It would be sheer hardihood for any Christian, at the present stage, to think himself justified in an attempt to act upon them. They can represent nothing but a *ballon d'essai*, sent up to test Christian opinion on a series of disconnected questions concerned with the main theme. The only controversial point on which there is absolute certainty is that the majority of the bishops are not prepared to condemn the use of contraceptives in marriage in any and every imaginable case. Beyond this, both in the matter of divorce and in the matter of birth control, everything remains more or less obscure.'

With Dr. Kirk's main criticisms I am in entire agreement, and nothing I have read since their publication has led me to alter my views about them. My own considered opinion is that the attitude of the confessor towards penitents who make use of contraceptives remains entirely unaffected by Resolution 15. The resolution itself is ambiguous, and offers no definite guidance even on general principles; further, as Dr. Gore points out,[2] the Lambeth Conference is not a synod, but simply an

[1] See 'The Lambeth Resolutions on Marriage and Sex,' *Church Quarterly Review*, October, 1930, pp. 96–110.

[2] *Lambeth on Contraceptives*, pp. 21–4.

advisory body. Whatever opinions it may express cannot over-rule the judgement of the Catholic Church, and, to quote Dr. Gore's own words, 'a priest who is responsible for following the judgement of the Church cannot absolve a penitent who confesses the use of some contraceptionalist method, and declines to relinquish it.'[1]

There is, however, one statement made by Dr. Kirk in his article which seems to call for special comment, since it directly affects the procedure of the priest in the confessional.

'The Encyclical,' he says, 'certainly leaves it open to any province of the Anglican Communion, or to individual diocesans, to enact without inconsistency for the jurisdictions under their control that the permission given by the Resolution for the use of contraceptives is subject, *inter alia*, to the direct sanction of authority being obtained in each particular case. It would seem, therefore, that no priest could be held liable to censure, on the basis of the Resolutions, if for these reasons he withheld absolution from a penitent who admitted the use of contraceptives, on whatever grounds, until he had referred the case, *sub sigillo*, to his bishop, or had received general instructions from the bishop on the subject.'[2]

This statement appears to me not only inconsistent with Dr. Kirk's admission that the resolution is incoherent and ambiguous, but is open to grave misunderstanding. How far the action of a confessor in referring a case *sub sigillo* to his bishop is dependent upon that bishop having definitely stated

[1] It has been suggested that the rigour of this position might at least occasionally be mitigated by an appeal to the principle of 'invincible error' which is fully discussed in all standard works on Moral Theology. The author believes, however, that this principle could rarely be applied to the subject under discussion, on which the mind of the Catholic Church is well known. The point is discussed at some length in an article by Dr. E. J. Mahoney in the *Clergy Review*, February, 1932, pp. 141–43.

[2] *Church Quarterly Review*, October, 1930, p. 104.

that he claims jurisdiction in such cases is not made clear. It is also very improbable that any bishop will adopt the line indicated by Dr. Kirk; but it is quite probable that some confessors might interpret his words to mean that they should refer penitents who make use of contraceptives to their diocesan for his final decision. I fear that such an action on the part of the confessor, in all ordinary circumstances, would constitute a violation of the seal.

The only occasion on which a confessor can refer the penitent to another tribunal is when the particular sin he confesses is reserved by the ordinary. 'Reserved cases' must be promulgated by the bishop and by no one else, and with their promulgation a machinery should be, and in the Roman Communion is, provided which is adequate to deal with them. It is entirely beyond the province of an individual confessor to decide what cases shall be reserved and what shall not; and it is fatally easy to construe Dr. Kirk's opinion as meaning, in view of Resolution 15, the use of contraceptives in married life is to be regarded as a reserved case. Nothing but confusion and injustice could result from the acceptance of this view. We adhere, therefore, to our contention that the Lambeth pronouncements have in no way modified our general practice, and we accept Dr. Gore's opinion as our own, that 'the judgement of the Church Catholic, based on the mind of Scripture, remains what it was.'

CHAPTER II

THE CONFESSIONS OF YOUTHS AND GIRLS

A consideration of the dangers to which youths and girls are exposed—Remedies to be employed in order to overcome these dangers—The value of Church Day Schools, Catechism, and early Confirmation—The treatment of working boys—The influence of the music-hall and cinema considered—The value of Church organizations—Various classes of dancing halls described—The influence of impure literature—The particular temptations of later youth—The formation of intimacies—Betrothal and Marriage.

IN this chapter it is proposed to deal with the particular temptations to which youths and girls between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one years are exposed, and the method of dealing with such dangers in the confessional. Since this is a wide period to cover it will be necessary to subdivide it into early youth, that is between fourteen and eighteen years, and later youth, that is between eighteen and twenty-one years ; even then such a division is, at the best, but arbitrary.

The age of fourteen years, both with boys and girls of all stations of life, is one full of dangers and pitfalls. This is particularly the case amongst the working classes, since at this time they generally leave school and proceed to factories or workshops, where they are exposed to new and dangerous temptations. Amongst the professional and more leisured classes also there is no immunity from danger, and those who have passed through a

Public School are well aware that it has its own special pitfalls which may prove as disastrous to youth as those to which a less fortunate class of children are exposed.

All religious and philanthropic workers are agreed that when boys or girls leave school it is extremely difficult to retain any hold upon them; yet this is the very time they most need the help of their religion. The sudden change of environment is greater than is generally realized. In school the child has been subjected to a more or less effective discipline, and his habit of mind has been to accept the statements of his teachers on authority and without question. In the factory this discipline, although it is still present, is very much relaxed, and, while the young worker still retains his naturally trustful attitude of mind, he gradually discovers that his elders have no particular reverence for authority, and that they freely question almost anything and everything. His inexperience of life makes him blind to the moral dangers which surround him, and the spirit of emulation, which is always strong in adolescence, makes him particularly susceptible to the influence of older people with whom he comes in contact. These considerations lead us to recognize the paramount necessity for a good influence to counteract the possible bad associations with which our young people may be surrounded. The priest has indeed a great and trying task to perform in guiding his young charges through this most difficult period, and in order that he may provide some adequate remedy he should thoroughly understand the dangers to which his young penitents are exposed.[1]

[1] Since the majority of priests using this book will have to deal more particularly with the working classes, our remarks apply to them rather than to better-class penitents.

The first danger undoubtedly is the workshop or factory. A boy while at school has associated entirely with other boys of about his own age, but now, when he enters the factory, he has to work with men and youths older than himself. He naturally pays much attention to their habits and language, he is commencing a new condition of life, and he aspires to be considered on an equality with those who are older than himself. In some cases he will be in a factory where the foreman or master is interested in his boys, and where the men are steady and reliable, but such conditions are rather the exception than the rule. More frequently he hears bad language and unwholesome ideas expressed by the older youths and men, religion is often adversely discussed and even openly scoffed at, he is assured that all religious people are hypocrites and the clergy lazy and dissolute. The ' broad way ' is opened to him in a manner he has never before understood, and it seems attractive. He often contracts habits of gambling, and sometimes, even at this early age, of drinking, and his ultimate downfall is assured. That this description is neither exaggerated nor pessimistic I feel certain from personal experience, from reading, and from many conversations with persons qualified to express an opinion on the subject.

It is not easy to generalize concerning the conditions which obtain in factories where female labour is almost exclusively employed. I have been at some pains to investigate these conditions in large industrial areas, and all the information I have received points to the conclusion that they vary enormously. The confessor who takes a real interest in his young penitents would do well to ascertain, with all due discretion, the reputation

of the various factories in his particular district; and this knowledge can be used profitably not only to counteract evil influence in individual cases, but also to guide young people leaving school into a wholesome sphere of employment. The After-Care Committees which exist in our large towns can often give invaluable help in this matter. We may say that on the whole the moral tone is better in those factories where female labour is exclusively employed than in the rest, but in many such factories bad language is common and indecent conversation is often indulged in, also gambling is extensively practised. One cannot refrain from mentioning that cases are known of employers of female labour who abuse their position in order to gratify their own evil lusts, promising advancement if their demands are complied with, or threatening dismissal if they are refused.

AMUSEMENTS AND RECREATION

Another great if less apparent evil is the craving for an excessive indulgence in amusements, and the choosing of the wrong kind of recreation. I shall deal with the dangers peculiar to youth in this connection later, but the importance of the subject seems to demand a general survey of the whole question at this stage of our inquiry. When we begin to classify our impressions the first fact which forces itself upon us, from its very obviousness, is the extraordinary diversity of opportunities offered for recreation. Within a radius of a quarter of a mile from where I am writing there are at least six large cinemas, all of them apparently in a flourishing condition; we have also a *Palais de Danse* conveniently near which draws large crowds nightly. And along the main thoroughfare I have counted no less than fifteen shops

where gramophones are sold, and where wireless installations may be bought at prices to suit almost any one's pocket. Yet, in spite of all these opportunities, I do not think it can be maintained that people to-day are any happier, or more contented with their lot, than they were before these things came into existence. In fact, students of economics warn us that we have already entered upon a period of social unrest which may be fraught with serious consequences; and that, while it is undeniably true that the mass of people are better housed to-day and have more opportunities for recreation than they have ever had, they are more dissatisfied with their condition than they have ever been.

Even if it is thought that this picture is painted in too sombre colours, it is still near enough to the true state of affairs to make us pause and think. We have sufficient grounds for asking if there may not be something seriously wrong with our amusements, since they evidently do not produce that physical contentment and mental refreshment which should be the result of recreation and leisure. When we examine more closely the amusements which are most popular with us, we find that they have one feature in common—they are all mechanical in their origin. This fact, I think, is one of great significance. The majority of our workers are under the domination of the machine for eight or ten hours every weekday of their lives, the throb of it is continually in their ears, and their work is generally so mechanical that they are in danger of becoming part of the machine themselves. One would have supposed that a machine-ridden people would have tried to get as far away as possible from the machine after working hours. On the contrary, they seem

to be attracted to it as iron is drawn by the magnet. Hours are spent in a darkened hall listening to the 'canned' music and dialogue of the talkies; weary limbs are jerked into renewed activity by the monotonous throb of the jazz-band drum and the blare of the saxophone; the motor of the gramophone plays its part in producing mechanical music; and that most wonderful invention of a mechanical age, the wireless, is installed in over seven million homes.

We do not need to be profound psychologists to recognize that there is something very wrong here; the important question is to discover causes and suggest remedies. If I am asked why it is that mechanical amusements are so popular, I can think of no better reply than to suggest that the present generation has lost the true meaning of recreation; it simply does not know how to amuse itself with profit, and, consequently, seeks what is nearest to hand. We must discover once again the truth that has been lost—that recreation, if it is to profit body and mind, must re-create. Our popular amusements do not do this; they give everything to the supine, lazy recipient, and demand nothing in return. Some few years ago a well-to-do friend of mine purchased a magnificent pianola; he claimed that it would be 'most educative' for the children, but it was nothing of the sort. The youngsters were fascinated by the toy for a time, and even to-day they occasionally perform on it; but they refused to learn to play the piano, or any other instrument, themselves, and thus, so far as music is concerned, they find no re-creation. All they possess is the means of wasting a little of their time.

It is hoped that this brief analysis of the situation will have impressed the reader with the necessity

for a more careful attention to the social side of our Church activities. Puritanism, with its gloomy doctrine of the depravity of human nature, has always been afraid of amusements, and has regarded them as instruments of the devil ; it is true to say, I think, that it has never grasped the vital importance, socially and spiritually, of leisure properly employed. The tradition of Catholicism, however, as history shows, has been for the Church to associate herself most intimately with the amusements of the people, and it is significant that the amusements which she most encouraged were essentially re-creative—that is, the participants were taught to do things themselves rather than to watch others doing them. Here is a clue which may guide us to some effective reform and reconstruction. We may lay it down as a general principle that any social work which aims simply at providing amusement for lazy folk is doomed to failure and ineffectiveness ; while constructive efforts, which aim at teaching people to use and enjoy their leisure, are based upon sound psychological and religious principles.

We shall be considering in its proper place the part that the Scout and Guide Movement should play in our efforts to influence youths and girls ; but we may notice here that, from the moment of its inception to the present time, this Movement has steadily kept before it the idea of encouraging profitable recreation as opposed to purposeless amusement. This, no doubt, is the secret of its remarkable success. It has made a clean break with the machine, and offers ample opportunities for individual enterprise and constructive ability as an antidote to the mechanical drudgery of the factory and workshop. The consequence is that not only youngsters but sedate adults get most

enthusiastic about the Movement, and such keenness is incomprehensible to those who have not discovered whence it originates. The Scout and Guide Movement, then, is a concrete example of how the principles we have advocated may be put into practice. We do not need additional parochial organizations—in fact, in many parishes the existing number might profitably be reduced ; but we do need to reflect seriously upon the purpose of such organizations. When we accept, as a fundamental principle, that the aim of all our social work is to teach our people, adults as well as adolescents, how to employ their leisure to the best advantage, our organizations at once receive a fresh impetus. We are no longer contented with Mothers' Meetings which do nothing more than mildly entertain a few women once a week, and with Saturday night ' hops ' which keep our young folk under our eye for a few hours.

Our young people, if they do not spend their leisure in indulging in the amusements already mentioned, are very liable to contract a habit which is even more dangerous—that of street lounging. Every priest who has worked in slum districts is familiar with the sight of more or less disorderly gangs of youths and girls who parade our streets at night ; in fact some of the thoroughfares of our large cities, particularly on a Saturday and Sunday night, are a disgrace to the community. We should be persistent in warning our young people against associating themselves with such gangs, and our lads from mixing with those youths who spend the greater part of their spare time standing at street corners smoking cigarettes and indulging in horse-play ; a practice which is only a prelude to public-house lounging at a later age.

A priest who visits, as he will do if he hopes to

retain his young people, will have a good idea of the home conditions under which they live. A bad home is the source of many of the evils already mentioned, and it is a difficulty hard to remedy. Again, a bad home usually means bad feeding and insanitary conditions ; consequently many of our lads and girls are of very inferior physique, and this is bound to react upon the moral character. Our parochial organizations will certainly help to counteract these influences ; but I suppose we shall all be willing to admit that they only touch the surface of a great problem, the true solution of which lies in the economic conditions in the State. We are simply making the best of a bad job.

The facts we have taken into consideration so far in this chapter seem to point to one conclusion only ; if we are to keep our children faithful in their religious profession after they have reached the school-leaving age we must prepare them to face the conflict by a thorough grounding in Catholic faith and practice while they are still at school. It is when they are submissive to educational discipline that we have our great opportunity ; hence the importance not only of Church schools but also of the clergy giving definite and careful instruction in such schools.

The work of preparing the child for its future battle with the world is of such supreme importance that it is hard to accept any plea on the part of the clergy of more important work keeping them from teaching in their own day schools. The teaching of the clergy, however, is not the only necessity if the Church school is to fulfil its object. We must have a staff of teachers who are thoroughly Catholic ; by this means alone can the proper atmosphere be obtained. Many priests

will say that in their particular case this condition is impossible ; but one would venture to think that by patience and tact the result might ultimately be attained.

The child receives its religious instruction not only in the Church day school but also in the Sunday Catechism. This should be most carefully organized and the teaching absolutely clear and definite if any permanent good is to be expected from it. It is perhaps needless to say that at this period children should learn the obligation of attending Sunday Mass, so that the habit of being present at the Lord's Service on the Lord's Day may be firmly established before they leave school.

If we are to prevent a large percentage of lapses during the time of adolescence the child must not only have a thorough knowledge of the Faith, but also be practising the same. Hence it should receive the sacrament of confirmation at an early age—if possible not later than the twelfth year ; this, in the author's opinion, is essential. A child confirmed at the age of ten has four years in which he may receive the spiritual strength to be obtained from regular confession and communion. During this period he is easily accessible to the priest, who can inculcate strict regularity in religious duties ; by this means more than half the battle against future relapse has been fought. It may be objected that parents will not consent to their children being confirmed at this early age. The author has found that in the majority of cases this prejudice against what people are pleased to call ' early confirmation ' may be overcome to a large extent by the priest explaining to the parents the reasons why early confirmation is necessary. In some cases when an ill-instructed parent has

objected that the child is ' not old enough to know what he is doing,' I have questioned both the parent and the child upon some of the truths of the Faith, and the former has speedily learned that the child is by far the better instructed. There are, unfortunately, still a number of bishops who either refuse to confirm children under the age of twelve or thirteen years, or place obstacles in the way of their receiving the sacrament. The priest who is confronted with this difficulty would be perfectly justified in admitting the children to Holy Communion before confirmation, since he is quite sure that they possess the necessary requirements for confirmation, and that when the opportunity for receiving the sacrament presents itself—in the shape of the bishop's consent to confirm—the children will be prepared to receive it.

We contend, then, that when a sure foundation has been laid on the lines suggested, both the child who is about to go out into the world, and the priest who has to protect him, have everything in their favour, and are in a position to grapple with the difficulties about to be encountered.

We will now consider the means to be employed for meeting the various dangers and temptations noted at the beginning of this chapter. First there is the danger of the workshop or factory. The priest should take the opportunity, either in or out of confession, to explain to a boy who is about to begin work the possible temptations he may meet, without in the first instance going very much into detail ; to be forewarned is to be forearmed. After the boy has been a few weeks at his new work the priest will be able to learn from him the general moral tone of the shop, and the kind of men and youths with whom he has to work. If he has reason to suppose that the moral tone is

bad he will regard the boy as in an *occasio proxima* ; whether it is a ' necessary occasion ' or not will depend upon the individual case. He would do well to consult the boy's father as to the advisability of his being removed to another shop, and, if the parent is a good Christian himself, he will be as anxious as the priest to see his boy removed from such dangerous surroundings. When, however, the occasion is really ' necessary,' and the boy cannot be removed, the priest will realize that the boy needs special care, and will do his best to help him to withstand the dangers which surround him.

When the boy has to work at odd hours, and is consequently unable to attend to his religious duties at the proper time, some self-sacrifice is needed on the part of the priest. It will be necessary to arrange special times for confession, sometimes quite late at night, and evening visiting will at times have to be done ; but all one's labour is amply repaid if the boy is preserved in the practice of his religion. Boys who, through late hours of work, are prevented from taking part in the social activities of the church may be invited to tea on Sunday afternoon, and so be kept in touch with the priest and with each other.

Clerics, as a body, are frequently accused of having a strong prejudice against all secular amusements ; they see evil, we are told, in the most innocent enjoyment, and refuse to recognize the good that is to be obtained from lighter recreation. This charge may in some measure be true ; it is very difficult to preserve an absolutely open mind on any question, but at the same time it is our duty, as the pastors of our flocks, to endeavour to find if they are exposed to moral dangers in their amusements, and to warn them if we are

convinced that such dangers exist. The chief amusements in which our young people indulge, as has already been indicated, are music halls, cinema houses, and dancing rooms ; and it may be well to consider each of these in turn.

The popularity of the music-hall has decreased during the last decade, and its influence upon our youth is correspondingly less widespread. The nature of the entertainment has also somewhat changed, the revue more and more taking the place of individual items. Some of the ' turns ' which are still in vogue, such as eccentric musicians, conjurers, and acrobats, are quite harmless, and prove a pleasing recreation after the day's work. Occasionally some prominent actor on the legitimate stage will visit the music-halls in a good sketch, which may be seen not only with pleasure, but also with profit. Other sketches and playlets, however, are more open to objection on moral grounds ; they frequently deal with such ethical problems as the faithless husband and the deceitful wife, and their influence is bad since the solution of the problem is often in conflict with Christian moral standards. We willingly admit that much of the comedy heard in the music-halls is perfectly harmless ; but we cannot avoid the general conclusion that the whole atmosphere of music-hall comedy favours a lax view of sin. Intemperance, more often than not, is treated as a huge joke, love and marriage are robbed of their sacred associations, while the dangers attendant upon gambling, horse-racing, and such-like pursuits are entirely ignored.

I approach with some hesitation the question of the moral influence of the revue, which is now so prominent and popular a feature of music-hall entertainment. I would, however, venture to

affirm that in the revue a distinct and direct appeal is made to the sexual emotions. This is done both through the ear and the eye. The ' patter ' and speaking parts frequently teem with suggestion, while the costumes of the chorus, and sometimes of the principals, are so designed as to display the female form in a most luxurious and wanton manner. It is not puritanical obscurantism but an ordinary knowledge of human nature which makes us certain that the effect of this kind of thing on our young people must be distinctly harmful. They get a distorted view of life and morals, they are led to think lightly of holy things, such as courtship and marriage, and the whole moral tone is weakened and in time seriously injured. It will have been made plain from this discussion that, while we do not consider the music-hall an unmitigated evil, we would nevertheless strongly advise our young people against forming the *habit* of attending such performances.

The cinema is the great rival to the music-hall as a place of entertainment for our young people ; the price of admission is low, the programme is frequently changed, and consequently there is every inducement to excessive indulgence. The most popular films are those dealing with crime, adventure, and so-called ' social dramas ' with their accompanying sex-appeal ; and, given a boy or girl with a strong imagination and an emotional temperament, the influence is bound to be harmful. Mr. Arnold Freeman, who has made a special study of the conditions of boy life in Birmingham, is emphatic regarding the evils of excessive indulgence in the cinema habit. ' The association between the picture palace and juvenile crime is so marked,' he says, ' that the justices have recently requested the General Purposes Committee to take

into consideration the existing arrangements for the admission of children to those entertainments. Any visitor to the Children's Courts will be struck by the constant references of young offenders to the picture palace, either as suggesting a criminal action or providing a motive for housebreaking and larceny.' [1]

Our condemnation of the music-hall and cinema, therefore, is the condemnation of an excessive indulgence in a form of entertainment which does little or nothing to re-create and educate the mind. In this connection we would recommend for the reader's consideration the following observations of the late Professor William James:

There is no more contemptible type of human character than that of the nerveless sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed. Rousseau, inflaming all the mothers of France, by his eloquence, to follow nature and nurse their babies themselves, while he sends his own children to the foundling hospital, is the classical example of what I mean. But every one of us in his measure, whenever, after glowing for an abstractly formulated Good, he practically ignores some actual case, among the squalid 'other particulars' of which that same Good lurks disguised, treads straight on Rousseau's path. All Goods are disguised by the vulgarity of their concomitants, in this work-a-day world; but woe to him who can only recognize them when he thinks them in their pure abstract form.

The habit of excessive novel-reading and theatre-going will produce true monsters in this line. The weeping of the Russian lady over fictitious personages in the play, while her coachman is freezing to death on his seat outside, is the sort of thing that everywhere happens on a less glaring scale. Even the habit of excessive indulgence in music, for those who are neither performers themselves nor musically gifted enough to take it in a purely intellectual way, has probably a relaxing effect upon the character. One becomes filled with emotions which habitually pass without prompting to any deed, and

[1] *Boy Life and Labour*, p. 135.

so the inertly sentimental condition is kept up. The remedy would be, never to suffer one's self to have an emotion at a concert, without expressing it afterward in *some* active way. Let the expression be the least thing in the world—speaking genially to one's grandmother, or giving up one's seat in a horse-car, if nothing more heroic offers—but let it not fail to take place.[1]

It is because the remedy suggested by Professor James is so rarely put into practice, or even thought of, that we emphasize the need for confessors to warn their young penitents to use these forms of entertainment in the strictest moderation, and strongly to discourage a too frequent attendance at either the music-hall or the cinema.

We must say a word about cheap literature of the 'adventure' type, which is so frequently the only form of reading about which our boys really care. I am inclined to think that this type of book has very little effect upon the majority of boys, the exception being those with strong imaginations, who will almost certainly be far more influenced by the cinema. A priest who has charge of boys would always do well to ascertain the style of literature they are in the habit of reading, and by recommending them to obtain from the Public Library books of a sound and healthy character he would keep them free from harm.

There remains one more evil we have noticed that the priest must combat—bad home influence and its result, street-lounging. We have already indicated that an antidote is to be found in parochial organizations such as clubs for recreation, the Church Cadets, the Boy Scouts, etc. One would submit that such organizations should simply be considered as a means to an end; they should exist primarily for the benefit of those who

[1] *Text-Book of Psychology*, p. 148.

are already attached to the Church; and their object should be to keep them in touch with Church life and the Sacraments. Their success or failure depends entirely upon the personality of the priest who is in charge. If quantity rather than quality is his aim, the work will have no permanent value, and the money and energy spent upon the organization will ultimately be wasted. If, on the other hand, his object is to keep in personal touch with his boys as a priest, and to exercise a real spiritual influence upon their lives, he has here a convenient means to that end.

DANCING HALLS

Dancing halls are well-known institutions in most of our cities; sessions are held each evening from seven to ten, and on one or two afternoons during the week; on occasion a 'Cinderella' is advertised, when dancing is prolonged until midnight. As a general rule the dancing hall is conducted in a perfectly respectable manner—that is, the management would not tolerate for a moment any unbecoming conduct; in fact good behaviour is absolutely insisted on, and the instructor is rightly concerned for the good name of his class. Nevertheless, we are bound to consider the dancing hall, if not an *occasio proxima* (as it is in many cases) at least an *occasio remota*; those who attend these places are exposed to two dangers, the greater that of forming harmful intimacies, the lesser that of excessive indulgence in frivolous pleasure. On this account the use of this form of recreation should be discouraged.

There are, unfortunately, dancing halls of another class—namely, those associated with public-houses, at which intoxicating drink is sold. These dances are quite informal, and admission is usually

free. The public-house is situated in some village or suburb of a large town, and is easily accessible by train, tram, or motor-bus. It is a common sight on early-closing days and Saturday afternoons to see crowds of youths and girls in these villages. They make the public-house with its dancing-room their chief resort, and all kinds of rowdyism and worse are indulged in. The scene at night-time at such places is painful in the extreme ; both youths and girls are often more than half intoxicated, and all restraint and modesty is thrown aside. Many a young girl can trace her downfall to an invitation from a friend to spend a ' day in the country,' which has resulted in the formation of the habit of visiting such places as here described. The confessor should be careful to ascertain the kind of dancing-room that has been visited by the penitent ; it is a good thing to ask, ' Was it a place where drink is sold ? ' When he finds that his penitent has visited one of these resorts he should not absolve unless the promise is given to abstain from attending such places in the future, for it is quite certain that if such a habit be formed the moral ruin of the penitent is assured.

INDECENT LITERATURE

Little need be said concerning the reading of impure literature ; the course for the confessor to adopt is obvious. The penitent usually says, ' I have read bad books, looked at bad pictures,' etc. The confessor should question with discretion in order to find out if the literature or pictures have been really indecent, and to what extent the habit has been indulged in. In many cases the things read or seen are vulgar rather than indecent, and may have only been looked at in a moment of

curiosity. If, however, the penitent has *in his possession* indecent literature or pictures the matter is serious, and the confessor should call upon him to destroy them ; this should be made a condition of absolution, particularly if the penitent also confesses pollution, as they are to him an immediate and voluntary occasion of sin.

LATER YOUTH

When we consider the particular dangers and temptations of later youth—that is, the period between the eighteenth and twenty-first year—we find that they are chiefly concerned with the sins against the Seventh Commandment. Generally speaking (we except the *vitium pollutionis* which unfortunately sometimes appears at an early age), the question of sex is not at all prominent in early youth, and only begins to assert itself when intimacies are formed between youths and girls at or about the age of eighteen years. We shall consider three dangers which seem to need our careful attention in dealing with penitents of this class ; they are, first and most important, the forming of intimacies between persons of the opposite sex, the frequenting of dancing halls, and the reading of bad (i.e. pornographic) literature.

An intimacy may not be wrong *per se*, if the intention of the two parties is ultimately marriage ; it is only right and proper that before any engagement is entered upon the parties should have an opportunity of getting to know each other. But here we would rather consider those intimacies which spring up between youths and girls of eighteen years or even younger. We find, particularly amongst the working classes, that it is common for quite young people to 'walk out,' as it is called ; in other words, to form an intimacy.

In this case there can be no idea of marriage within a reasonable time ; the parties are not only too young to contract marriage, but are also unable for financial reasons to keep a home. We do not suggest that in the first instance there is anything morally wrong in the intimacy, it may be quite innocent and pure ; nevertheless, both the unanimous opinion of moralists and personal experience show that such relationships are dangerous, and ought not to be allowed. We would, therefore, state as a general principle that intimacies should be discouraged unless both parties are of a proper age to contract matrimony, and are in the position to marry after a not too long engagement. Healthy social intercourse between the sexes, through the medium of the various parochial organizations, is perhaps the most effective means of counteracting undesirable intimacies. When the confessor finds, either in or out of confession, that one of his young people has formed an intimacy he should do all in his power to prevent its being continued. He could well point out that the only possible ground for an intimacy is marriage, and that boys and girls are not in a position to contract, and have no business to be thinking about marriage ; other reasons will also suggest themselves to priests dealing with particular cases. When the sin of impurity, in whatever degree, has actually been committed by the young penitent, the course to adopt is perfectly plain ; the intimacy constitutes a voluntary and immediate occasion of sin, and must be given up or absolution refused.

BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE

We may here, for the sake of completeness, consider briefly the question of betrothal and marriage. One of the great dangers of betrothal is

the anticipation of the marriage debt, and, as is well known, amongst the uninstructed this anticipation is often not even considered to be a sin. It seems to be accepted now as a matter of course that engaged couples shall enjoy the utmost freedom, and parents, either from choice or necessity, accede to the prevalent opinion. It thus happens that the betrothed couple are often left for long hours entirely alone in the house, they are accustomed to go for long walks in the evening and to return home at very late hours, and even in some cases, amongst the working classes, the young man is invited to lodge permanently at the house of his betrothed. Then, when things go wrong, the tearful mother comes to the priest and protests that 'she never could have believed that she would have a daughter who could so disgrace the family.' The English mind instinctively revolts against a ruling such as this—'frequent visiting of engaged persons without supervision of parents or relations is, in general, to be regarded and treated as an *immediate* occasion of sin, and that not *per accidens*, but *per se*.'[1] But we may still be of the opinion that far too much latitude is allowed, and we ought to be fully alive to the dangers which the results of experience warn us are present. The priest, as the guardian of the morals of his flock, cannot do less than warn parents of their responsibilities in this matter; how this warning is to be conveyed will depend upon circumstances, and it should, of course, be done in a tactful manner.

Long engagements, in view of the dangers to which betrothed couples are exposed, are in almost all cases bad, and the confessor is well within his rights in advising early marriage. In dealing with

[1] Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, p. 593.

penitents who are betrothed, if the opportunity arises in confession the priest should emphasize the sacred character of the engagement that has been entered upon, the need of absolute purity as a preparation for the sacrament of Marriage, that chaste love and not animal passion should rule the heart, and that a frequent reception of the sacraments is the best means of preserving the sanctity of betrothal.

CHAPTER III

THE CONFESSIONS OF CHILDREN

The importance of this work—A consideration of the difficulties attendant upon it—At what age should a child begin to make use of this sacrament?—The frequency of children's confessions—The reason children's confessions are often unsatisfactory—The importance of emphasizing the need of contrition—Detailed consideration of the sins of stealing, lying, and impurity in children's confessions—Suitable penances for children.

MOST of us, I suppose, would admit that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to over-estimate the importance of hearing the confessions of children. Yet the text-books on Moral Theology are by no means over-burdened with advice on this subject, and in practice the necessities of parochial work often make it imperative that the junior priest on the staff, and consequently the one with the least experience, should undertake this important work. The object of this chapter is to indicate the possibilities which lie open to those who have the spiritual direction of the young, and the method of dealing with children, both when preparing them for confession and in the tribunal itself.

That great possibilities lie open to a skilled children's confessor is self-evident. He takes over the care of the child at a time when its mind is at its most receptive period. He has not, as in the case of adults, to deal with firmly-established habits of

sin, but rather with *tendencies*; in this lies the importance of his work. We recognize that each individual differs temperamentally, and also that in children we have, as it were, a *force* directing to certain evils, differing in individuals, but presenting the common characteristic that as yet there is only a tendency; a fixed habit is absent. The elemental passions may be turned to good or evil; an ardent nature may develop into a sinner or a saint. So the priest who hears the confessions of children has the wax in his hands; he has the power to mould it to a wonderful degree. The child trusts him, and his influence may be used to counteract the many worldly and adverse influences to which the child will be subject in the ordinary course of its life.

When the child has been well instructed with regard to confession the priest will possess an unique knowledge of its spiritual condition; to him will be made known the beginnings of secret habits of vice unsuspected by the parent or the teacher, and he will be able to deal with them with all the spiritual power vested in his holy office. With regard to sins which may or may not be known to the parent or teacher (such as lying and stealing), the confessor has great opportunities, for the child will not fear punishment at his hands, and may, in consequence, be led to a real supernatural sorrow for sin, as opposed to a tardy remorse produced by the dread of being found out or the fear of punishment. The confessional may also be useful in a wonderful way to inculcate the highest principles of honour and integrity.

While admitting the great possibilities there are in the hearing of children's confessions, we must also grant that the work presents serious difficulties. In the first place there is the *personal handicap*;

all priests do not possess that sympathy with children which is of the greatest value if one is to carry out one's work successfully. Children have an intuition which helps them to recognize who is in sympathy with them, and, while they will readily give their confidence to those who possess this sympathy, they, not unnaturally, exhibit a reticence towards those who have not got it.

The second difficulty is to see things from *the child's point of view*. It is very hard for us to look upon the world, sin, and temptation through the child's eyes, and to appreciate his difficulties and temptations. What to us are little things, to him are matters of supreme importance; the broken toy at the age of ten is of greater moment than the fall of an Empire at forty.

Again, children's confessions are often *hard to understand*; they either obscure their sins with much unnecessary detail, or else express themselves in an indefinite manner. In consequence of this, the priest must give the closest attention while they are making their confessions, in order to arrive at a correct opinion of their spiritual condition.

Finally, difficulty is experienced in getting children to realize *the gravity of sin in its proper proportion*. We have to realize that their minds are not trained, but in the process of training, and that they cannot recognize—in the same way as we do—the distinction between mortal and venial sin. They not infrequently suffer from an erroneous conscience, and the influence of uninstructed or irreligious parents contributes in no small degree to this. It is the duty of the confessor to put sins in their proper proportion to the child, to readjust its moral perspective. It is perhaps well to remember that moral heresy is just as prevalent as error in matters of faith.

THE AGE OF FIRST CONFESSION

'At what age should a child begin to make use of the sacrament of Penance?' is a question of great practical importance. With us the common custom seems to be for the child to make its first confession just before receiving the sacrament of confirmation; that is, generally speaking, between the ages of twelve and fourteen years—sometimes later, very seldom earlier. Obviously a child is fitted to receive the sacrament as soon as it knows the difference between right and wrong, and, through the weakness of human nature, has chosen the wrong. It then becomes a fit subject for the sacrament, and must receive it in order to obtain forgiveness. It must also possess sufficient knowledge to produce the necessary dispositions for receiving absolution; that is, it must be capable of contrition or at least attrition, and so understand the wickedness and hatefulness of sin as an offence committed against God. Also it must have sufficient ability to confess its sins. We cannot, therefore, fix upon any definite age for the first confession; it will depend upon the mental and spiritual ability of the child, and each individual case will have to be judged on its own merits.

We can, however, take the case of a child of average ability, and it would seem that such an one should begin to make its confession between the ages of eight and ten years.[1] This conclusion is arrived at as follows: The average child within this range certainly knows the difference between

[1] It may be well to point out that the author never instructs young children on confession without the full knowledge and consent of their parents; nor does he, in the majority of cases, find their consent difficult to obtain.

right and wrong ; it has learned that there is such a thing as obedience to a higher power, and that disobedience involves displeasure and, in the majority of cases, punishment. Its life, both at home and at school, is constantly illustrating this ; for, in the former case, the parent demands obedience, and, in the latter, the master or mistress. In the case where the child has a good home with conscientious parents, or attends a school where the master strives to inculcate love and respect, as well as obedience, the position is still more favourable, and the idea of true contrition will be the more easily acquired, and at an earlier age. The benefits to be obtained from an early use of the sacrament of Penance are fairly obvious. The infant mind is deeply impressed by that most necessary factor in the spiritual life, a *sense of sin*. It also obtains a *sense of discipline*, and that at a time when it can most easily be impressed upon the growing mind. It is also taught that *restraint* must be placed upon the inclinations of the body and of the mind.

FREQUENCY OF CONFESSION

One more question before leaving this part of our subject : 'How often ought the child to make its confession ?' In the case of a child admitted to the sacrament of Penance some time before confirmation and communion, one would endeavour to avoid two extremes—on the one hand, advising confession too frequently, so that the sacrament becomes either tedious or mechanical ; and, on the other, allowing so long a time to elapse between each confession that it would be impossible for the child to make a proper confession of the species and number of sins committed owing to the strain upon the memory. Each priest should,

of course, be guided to a great extent by his own personal experience in the matter, and should be influenced by the class of children amongst whom he is called to minister. It is suggested that, as a general rule, young children should come to confession at least before the three great festivals of the Church, and not more frequently than four or five times a year. In any case, there should be a *perfectly definite rule* about the matter.[1] After confirmation, it is usual for children to commence receiving Penance and communion at least once each month.

SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES

I suppose every priest who has had any experience in hearing children's confessions has found that a certain number—sometimes the majority—of such confessions are very indefinite, and do not give him any real idea of the spiritual condition of the child. Such lack of definiteness appears to be due to two causes : (*a*) Insufficient and careless instruction on the nature of the sacrament, and how to prepare for confession ; and (*b*) an indiscriminate use of, and a false trust in, self-examination papers. Let us consider these two points.

With regard to (*a*), one can hardly be accused of injustice in saying that our priests are often far too careless in their preliminary instructions on confession. In many cases only one or, at the most, two lessons are given on the subject, and these come in the middle or at the end of several other instructions in preparation for confirmation. During the few short weeks preceding confirmation

[1] Some priests, thoroughly experienced in hearing children's confessions, strongly object to a definite rule being given. 'Wash when you are dirty' is their rule. I feel, however, that a definite rule is best

the child's mind is crammed with a host of facts which it is totally unable to assimilate. No wonder then that confessions are often most unsatisfactory! All this points to the advisability of preparing children for confession quite independent of, and previous to preparation for, confirmation. The course would be devoted entirely to the subject of penance, and, one would think, could not adequately be dealt with under six or eight lessons. Instructions on the sacrament of Penance should, of course, be given in full detail, and at frequent intervals, to children in the Catechism, and, if possible, in the Church day schools.

The use of self-examination papers presents several difficulties. There is no doubt that they have their use; it is also perfectly certain that they can be abused.[1] What, then, is to be our attitude towards them? Personally I believe that they cannot be entirely abolished. The course I usually adopt is as follows: The children are told that they must consider the papers as a general guide to help them to find out their sins; that they should not simply copy the sins on to their paper, but, as far as possible, use their own words in stating their sins; that they must be most careful to state, as nearly as they can, the number of times they have committed a certain sin, under what circumstances it was committed, and in some cases the place should be mentioned—i.e. in church, at home, or at school; also that they should clearly state what are their besetting sins. When this is done the dangers involved in the use of self-examination papers are considerably minimized.

I feel most strongly that it is very advisable before a first confession, that either the priest him-

[1] See pp. 58–9.

self (in the case of boys) or a Sister (in the case of girls) should assist the child in preparing his or her confession ; by this means a child is able to make a complete confession, and many abuses are avoided. This practice has the support of many competent moralists of the Roman Communion. There is a difference of opinion as to whether children should write their confessions or not. Personally I am in favour of the practice, certainly always for a first confession. I am, however, aware of powerful arguments against this view.

Before leaving the preparation for confession I should like to emphasize the importance of instructors' explaining most clearly and definitely the nature and need of contrition. There is a great danger of children coming to confession without contrition—using the word to include both contrition proper and attrition. They may quite easily grasp the idea of confessing their sins, and yet have no adequate conception of that supernatural and hearty sorrow for sin and sincere purpose of amendment which must accompany every confession if absolution is to be received.

COMMON SINS OF CHILDREN

Confessors agree that there are three sins which are most common amongst children ; these are stealing, lying, and impurity. The confessor should be on the watch for them, and be prepared to deal with them in a competent manner, for if they are persisted in they will prove to be the child's downfall. We may therefore profitably consider them in some detail.

With regard to stealing. Unless children have been properly instructed they generally confess this sin by saying, ' I have stolen things,' or ' I have taken things which do not belong to me.' It is a

common thing, in the Midlands at any rate, for children to use the expression, ' I have picked ' ; almost always they mean by this that they have stolen food. The confessor should never let such expressions pass without question. It is absolutely necessary, if he is to do any good, that he should get at the root of the matter—that is, to find out not only *what* the child has stolen, but *why* he has stolen it. If he says he has stolen food, the priest should inquire the reason of the theft ; often poor children take food because they are in want, and cannot resist the promptings of hunger. If the food has been taken from home, the confessor would advise the child always to ask its parent, if it requires food. In other cases the priest might well point out the danger of stealing, and, at the same time, advise the child, if there is no food in the house for the parents to give it, to come to him (the priest) and he will see that it has something to eat.

Children sometimes pilfer sweets, etc., from shops, in order to satisfy their craving for them—i.e. the basis of such a theft is *sensuality*. It is also a common thing for children, when sent on errands, to keep back part of the change given them, and to spend it upon themselves. When a child confesses that he has stolen money the confessor should always ask from where it was stolen, the amount stolen, and what has been done with it. In those somewhat rare but distressing cases, in which the parents encourage their children to steal, the confessor must, of course, urge the child to disobey its parents. It might also be well, in persistent and bad cases, for the confessor to get the child to mention the facts *outside* its confession, so that he can deal with the parents directly ; care should, however, be taken that there is no

danger of the sacrament being brought into disrepute by this action. Again, when children steal because they are incited to do so by the companions with whom they associate, they must be told to avoid such companions in the future.

Some children are born thieves—that is to say, there is an *innate tendency* to steal ; in older children the habit has become ingrained before use is made of the sacrament of Penance. These cases are most difficult to deal with, and great care and patience is necessary. The confessor should take great pains to point out the ultimate disaster which is bound to overtake the thief. He may well emphasize the fact that every thief now in prison began by at first taking small things, and that only misery and dishonour can result if the sin is persisted in. It may be objected that showing the temporal punishment resulting from the sin is a low ideal ; but it must be remembered that children who habitually steal have neither a high moral nor spiritual standard. Also, the confessor should not exclusively dwell upon the temporal punishment, but also strive to bring home to the child the fact that the All-seeing Eye of God beholds all his actions, and that nothing is hid from Him. It is generally agreed that children should not be called upon to make restitution ; in the majority of cases they are quite unable to do so. If, however, the child has still the thing stolen in his possession he should be instructed to return it, and sometimes the confessor himself may be able to help in returning the stolen article.

With regard to lying. It is usually not difficult to see when a child shows a tendency to lying or general deceitfulness, for its natural simple-mindedness makes it difficult for it to employ sufficient craft to disguise its deceit. At the same time it

must be remembered that some unfortunate children exhibit an astounding degree of natural cunning, and are most difficult to deal with ; it is a matter of thankfulness that such cases are rare. We may also note that this sin is often confessed in the most casual manner, the child not realizing its gravity, and there being a consequent lack of contrition. This is especially the case with children coming from the homes of godless parents, where the standard of honour is very low.

The confessor should take pains to point out, with suitable illustrations from Holy Scripture, the gravity of this sin. He should try to inculcate the great value of truthfulness and honour, the necessity of straightforward conduct, and the keeping of one's promises, even if it means great personal inconvenience. He should also indicate the respect given to those who are known to be honest and truthful, and the distrust in which those are held who break their word, deceive, or lie.

With regard to impurity. If children are taught to make their confession at an early age, as suggested here, the priest's duties will be made much easier with regard to this sin. It is important to remember that young children often confuse immodesty with impurity. When doubt arises a discreet question ought to make the matter clear. The age of puberty is the time of danger with regard to the *vitium pollutionis*. On leaving school at the age of fourteen years, and going into a factory or workshop, the child is often brought into contact with evil-minded persons only too ready to lead him into sin. The confessor can be of great help to a penitent of this age, and may save him from untold evils. It is perhaps hardly necessary to mention that a priest should be very discreet in questioning children upon this sin ; it is far better that the

confession suffer in integrity than that the child shall have its curiosity aroused with regard to sins of which it is in ignorance. Moralists are agreed on this point.

SUITABLE PENANCES

We may conclude with a few observations on the kind of penances that should be given to children. The confessor, realizing the importance of the penance being performed, should avoid setting a complicated one. Most children know several hymns and prayers by heart, and these would form suitable penances. Children should never be given a long penance, and consequently the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, *Gloria*, and *Magnificat* may suitably be given. Attendance at daily Mass once during the week may be imposed with profit upon those children the confessor considers will perform it, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, if it be reserved in the church, will teach children to use God's house as a place of prayer.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONFESSIONS OF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

The confessions of priests—The importance of a skilled and holy director—A distinction made between occasionally hearing a priest's confession and undertaking his direction—An illustration showing the need of a system of 'reserving' certain sins—Certain points to be observed in hearing the confessions of priests—The confessions of Religious—Contemplative and Active Orders—The parish priest's position when director to Mission Sisters—General rules to be observed in hearing the confessions of Sisters—Special virtues required in those living the community life—How to guard against certain common abuses.

THE CONFESSIONS OF PRIESTS

THE sacred office of the priesthood involves so many responsibilities that it is of the utmost importance for those holding it to exercise the greatest care in the choice of a confessor. We need both a skilful director who will help us in our difficulties, and also a holy confessor who will guide us from his own spiritual experience, and by his sanctified life. This applies to all clerics, but it is of special importance that the young priest or deacon should have a director who is thoroughly qualified to undertake his spiritual guidance. He is beginning life under entirely new conditions. He is, in a great measure, ignorant of the many and varied temptations and difficulties he has to meet, the disappointments he will have to face; his confessor is the one person to whom he can lay

open his soul, and to whom he will look for guidance and help.

The young priest, fresh from his ordination, is filled with apostolic zeal ; he burns with the desire to draw souls nearer to his Master, and longs to model his life upon that of the great High Priest. But youth and inexperience are serious handicaps ; mistakes are made, reproof and correction follow, the first zeal evaporates as time goes on, and how often we find the once enthusiastic priest contented to settle down to a life of semi-indolence, and a perfunctory performance of the absolutely necessary duties of parish routine. The result in many cases would have been far different if prudence had been exercised in the choice of a good confessor. Such a one would explain the difficulties that have to be encountered, would give encouragement in times of despondency, and loving correction when temptations to spiritual sloth come upon the soul. He would observe a tender but firm insistence upon the performance of priestly duties, the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, the Divine Office, meditation, and pastoral care, and by his guidance and holy example would aid the young priest to maintain his high ideal. One would presume to call the attention of brother parish priests to the supreme importance of suggesting to their deacons and young priests the name of some experienced and holy confessor to whom they may go for spiritual direction.

The sacrament of Penance, administered by a skilful director, is the great reviving force in the life of a priest. We preach so many sermons ourselves that the exhortations of others have very little effect upon us. We admonish, reprove, and warn almost every day of our lives, and we are apt to forget that we ourselves need to be

admonished, warned, and even reproved. We have to comfort and help those who are in trouble, we also need spiritual comfort and advice in times of desolation and difficulty. All these helps we can receive if our confessor has been chosen with due care. An arrangement has been made in Birmingham, and carried on with success for some years, by which a Cowley Father attends at one of the churches in the diocese each month to receive the confessions of priests. There is no doubt that a religious is an ideal confessor for priests, and many of us can bear witness to the great help we have obtained from the arrangement which exists in our diocese.

Many priests may find great difficulty, owing to parochial and other obstacles, in making their confessions with any degree of regularity to the director of their choice ; in such cases, we may point out, there seems to be no reason why confession should not be made frequently to some neighbouring priest, and counsel received, as occasion requires, from one's own director.

It will be seen that a distinction is made between accepting the direction of priests and occasionally receiving their confessions. The former, being an undertaking which calls for mature and sound judgement, should more properly be reserved for those confessors who have had many years of experience ; while any priest who knows his Moral Theology, and is qualified to receive confessions, may engage upon the latter.

There is one case presenting great difficulty which we would mention here. A priest, not a regular penitent of the confessor, comes to his confession, and during the course of it accuses himself of some sin of a particularly serious nature. How is the case to be dealt with ? No difficulty

would have been experienced in pre-reformation days because certain sins were then reserved by the bishop, and the confessor would not have been able, without the necessary faculties, to absolve the penitent. But at the present time the reservation of certain sins is not used as part of the episcopal discipline, and consequently the matter has to be dealt with on its individual merits. The priest receiving the confession should be guided by the two principles which every good confessor should have in mind while administering the sacrament. He should endeavour to give the penitent all the help possible, while taking care to protect the sacrament from irreverence. In many cases he would be able to make use of the rules of Moral Theology which apply to the laity ; for instance, if the sin involved another person who constituted a voluntary and immediate occasion of sin, he would insist upon the occasion being removed before he granted absolution. If, however, he feels that the case is of such difficulty that he doubts his ability to deal with it, he should either urge the penitent to make his confession to some more experienced priest, or ask his permission to state the case, impersonally of course, to some theologian. Much harm might be done in a case of this kind by granting absolution on easy terms.

The case just dealt with illustrates the need of our Bishops exercising their right to reserve special sins. Father Bickersteth puts the matter clearly in the following words :

> The point of most practical importance in which the present writer earnestly desires that the Bishops would take action has to do with the confessions of priests. Supposing a priest falls into sin so grave that in the eyes of all Christian people, if the facts were known, he would seem unfit to exercise his ministry until after some long period of penance, it is bad that he should be able to quiet his conscience and celebrate at

once, by making his confession and receiving absolution from a priest of his own selection, who may lack the knowledge, the experience, and the courage to deal with such a case. It would be far better if the clergy generally were instructed, that their faculties and licence to pronounce absolution were subject to some limitation. Certain cases might be reserved to the bishop himself, or to a priest appointed by him with special authority to deal with cases of a very grave character. If the principle of reserved cases were once established it would give the opportunity to raise the moral standard, and prevent the growing laxity which is encouraged by careless or ignorant confessors, who may pass lightly over certain offences which ought to be condemned and severely punished.[1]

Since most of us are at times called upon to hear the confessions of brother priests, a few rules are offered for the guidance of those who have had little or no experience in the matter. It will not be necessary, as a general rule, to question priests ; if, however, the confessor feels that his penitent has not expressed himself clearly he should ask, 'Do you consider you committed a grave sin in this particular case?' Reproof must be given if necessary, and this quite irrespective of the position of the penitent ; the very fact of his making his confession shows that he is willing to submit to the judgement of the priest he has chosen to hear it. But in reproving we should never forget that we are addressing a brother priest, and it should be done with the greatest courtesy ; it is well always to identify oneself with the penitent, 'We priests need to be specially careful,' etc.

The confessor will have to use his own judgement as to whether exhortation is necessary or not. One can hardly neglect to give it when the penitent has fallen into those sins which are special dangers in the priestly life. Worldliness is one of these dangers. The priesthood is a consecrated life, and

[1] *The Ministry of Absolution*, p. 45.

above all things it is necessary for us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. The signs of worldliness are sloth, an excessive love of amusement, an attachment to the pleasures of the table, etc., and when these are confessed exhortation should be given. The priestly life is also a life of prayer, and in hearing the confessions of priests we should pay special attention to the defects exhibited in this matter. Meditation and the Daily Offices should be used with regularity, and any serious neglect of these would need brotherly correction. The offering of the Holy Sacrifice is the priest's perfect prayer, and one would notice a frequent neglect of preparation and thanksgiving. Finally, the priestly life is one of activity ; he has committed to him the cure of souls, and persistent neglect of visitation, unpunctuality at Mass, offices, and the confessional, carelessness in ministering to the sick, and neglect of study in preparation for sermons and addresses are all matters which may be dealt with in a kindly but nevertheless firm manner.

THE CONFESSIONS OF RELIGIOUS

Religious orders, both for men and women, are divided into two classes, contemplative and active. The former retire from the world when they are received into the Order, and, unless the circumstances are very exceptional, never afterwards leave the convent ; for this reason they are sometimes called ' enclosed ' monks or nuns. Contemplatives are protected from the temptations which are common to those who live in contact with the world, and this is a great aid to their advancement in the spiritual life, but they have their own special interior temptations with which to contend. Active Orders are engaged in works of charity, and so

come in touch with the world ; they are protected by their vocation from many dangers, but nevertheless are exposed to worldly temptations in their work. We shall consider in this chapter the duties incumbent upon a priest who has Sisters working in his parish, and who is responsible for receiving their confessions.

A parish priest who is expected to hear the confessions of his Sisters should have a clear understanding with the chaplain of the community to which they belong. This is only fair to both parties, and will avoid many possible difficulties which might otherwise arise. His duties ought to be clearly defined, and he should know if he is to receive their confessions only, or to undertake their spiritual direction in addition.

It is of the greatest importance, if the priest is to act as director, that he should have a thorough knowledge of the Rule of the Order. He should have in his possession a copy of the Rule of Life, and also of the Statutes of the Community, and should have a competent knowledge of the contents of both. Each Order has its own particular characteristics, and his aim in giving direction should be to preserve the spirit of the community. This can only be done by an intelligent appreciation of the Rule of Life. Sisters working in a parish usually reside in a mission house provided for them, but their real home is the convent, or Mother House, and each district house should reflect the spirit of the convent ; otherwise the Sisters are liable to lose the true characteristics of their community.

Mission Sisters have both to pray and to work, and it is their confessor's duty to see that a proper balance is preserved between these two objects of their life. The function of a Mission Order is to win souls to Christ. This can only be performed

when the Sisters themselves are living the Christ-life ; they are in the world but not of the world, they must be essentially religious, living the life of prayer, the results of which are shown forth in their parochial activities. It is by no means easy to maintain this balance between prayer and work. Some Sisters, filled with missionary enthusiasm, and endowed with gifts for organization, are greatly tempted to neglect their inner life with Christ, while others of a more contemplative nature find so much happiness and consolation in prayer that they neglect their parochial work to such a degree that an unfair burden is placed upon other religious working with them. The director will endeavour to keep both sides of their life in proper proportion ; the strict observance of the Rule is of first importance, and parochial duties must be so arranged that there is no undue interference with this.

We now pass on to a consideration of some general rules to be observed in hearing the confessions of Sisters. The director should first strive to win the confidence of his penitent. A religious, from the very nature of her vocation, has to rely in no small degree upon her spiritual director. Her life is one of dedication to God, and a striving after perfection. She needs, then, special help and guidance, and her confessor is the person who should be qualified to give the necessary help. A harsh and hurried manner in the confessional will often cause women, particularly if they are by nature shy and reticent, entirely to withhold their confidence. They make good confessions, it is true, but they fail to disclose the difficulties of their inner life ; they feel there is a lack of sympathy, and the confessor finds that, while he can find no fault with the way in which the confession is made, he is, nevertheless, entirely ignorant of the true

spiritual condition of his penitent. This reserve can only be broken down by exercising patience, and by treating the penitent uniformly with gentleness and consideration. Once he can obtain the confidence of his penitent the confessor is in a position to help and advise her in her spiritual difficulties.

When the Sister asks her director's advice upon a matter of some importance, a hurried decision, made on the spur of the moment, is to be avoided. The confessor should, of course, be well informed in Ascetic Theology, but he can hardly be expected to have a perfect knowledge of all details. It is far better for him to postpone giving advice until authorities have been consulted, and he can then make himself thoroughly acquainted with all the details involved in the question.

The confessor needs to exercise great care in order to avoid allowing anything he has heard in confession to influence him in his conduct towards the Sister outside the confessional. This also applies, perhaps in a greater degree, when he is discussing the affairs of his mission house, or the conduct of individual Sisters with the Mother Superior, the chaplain, or the Sister-in-Charge. It is difficult, in these cases, to separate the knowledge gained in confession from that obtained outside ; the seal might, therefore, be easily violated unless great caution were observed, and this must be avoided at all cost.

Another warning may here be given. The parish priest should take care not to interfere in the affairs of the mission house, or of the community. The Sister-in-Charge is responsible for the former, the convent authorities for the latter. He should refuse to discuss community affairs with his Sisters (that is, of course, unless he has permission to do

so from the Mother or the chaplain), and should tell them that all complaints and suggestions should be made to the proper authorities. In all cases he should be careful not to exceed the duties of his office ; otherwise trouble is bound ultimately to result.

With regard to his conduct towards his Sisters outside the confessional, the parish priest should be careful not to associate with them more than is necessary. He will, of course, have to consult them frequently on parochial matters, but all general and desultory conversation should be avoided.

In order that the true religious spirit may be maintained the confessor would carefully notice any breach of the Rule of Life mentioned in confession. He should see that proper time and care is given to meditation, and be willing to offer help when difficulties arise. He should be very patient with those who find it hard to meditate, and encourage them to greater effort and perseverance. The Divine Office is the great vocal prayer of the religious. It should be recited, if possible, in choir, and should be said with attention and devotion. When the office has to be said privately it should not be hurried, but recited with the same care and attention as when in chapel. The words need not be spoken aloud, but should be formed with the lips.

The religious should always strive to maintain a true recollection of the divine Presence, and the special means to this end recommended by the Rule of the particular Order to which the Sister belongs should be strictly observed. The rule of silence is of great importance, and the confessor should patiently point out its value to those Sisters who fail to keep it properly. He will also carefully attend to any deflection from the spirit of the three

vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. A devout and frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament should be the aim of every religious. It is here she meets her spiritual Bridegroom, and obtains the strength necessary for the development of the interior life, and the performance of her parochial duties. The confessor would do well to have a general understanding with the chaplain of the community as to the frequency of confession and communion to be recommended to the Sisters under his care.

Special virtues are necessary for those who are called upon to live together in the community life, the exercise of which preserves the harmony so essential in a well-ordered religious house. A willing and prompt obedience must be given to superiors in all lawful things. It should be the special care of each religious to perform those duties assigned to her, whether they be in the mission house or in the parish, with exactitude and punctuality ; all work is done, not for one's own convenience or advancement, but to the honour and glory of God, and only the best can be given to Him. For the same reason there should be an entire absence of jealousy because of the success attendant upon another Sister's work.

The religious should be neat and orderly in her life, she should carefully obey the rules laid down in the Customary of her particular Order as to conduct, acts of reverence, clothing, etc. She should also be ready at any time to give an orderly account of the parochial work for which she is responsible. She should have a true sisterly love for all the members of her community, and avoid above all things discussing their faults with others, indulging in gossip, or becoming a party to dissensions. Since we are all the children of Adam, faults

and shortcomings are bound to exist, but a Sister should remember that it rests with the Superior to administer correction, and that she will serve God and her community better by showing in her own life the true religious spirit, than by discussing the defects of others. The vow of chastity should be guarded by the avoidance of all familiarity and particular friendships, and, if there are community rules with regard to personal deportment (as is generally the case) they should be carefully observed. Finally, the Sister should strive to cultivate a pure and holy love for her spiritual Bridegroom, dedicating her whole life to His service, and doing everything for His honour and glory. She should share with Him all her joys and all her sorrows, and be prepared to suffer all things for His sake.

The confessor should be careful to notice and guard against certain common abuses which may creep in amongst the Sisters under his care, and, if not checked, in time become serious. The following are specially to be noticed: Any violation of the spirit of the vow of poverty, such as accepting presents without the Superior's knowledge or permission; sins against charity, either in respect to other Sisters or externs. The formation of particular friendships should be strongly discouraged, as being contrary to the true religious spirit. There is always a danger that Sisters working in a parish may form strong friendships with lay-workers. These can hardly ever fail to be harmful, as parish affairs are discussed, grievances aired, etc., between the two persons, and often no small amount of gossiping is indulged in. The result is still more harmful if the Sister frequently visits the house of the lay-worker, taking tea with her, meeting other ladies, and perhaps accepting presents. If such a course is persisted in, the religious life is

bound to be damaged. Many Orders provide special rules which forbid Sisters to visit and take meals at the houses of the laity without the permission of a superior. In such cases there is a deliberate infringement of the rule when such friendships are made.

Religious should be warned against spiritual sloth—i.e. neglect of meditation, offices, etc. We have already noticed the true balance that should be preserved between religious and parochial duties. The Sister should always remember her religious vocation in her dealings with externs; there should be a complete absence of all frivolous and undignified behaviour, the spirit of recollection should be carefully preserved, and on no account should she ever discuss the affairs of her community with those outside. If these precautions are neglected there is bound to be grave danger of scandal. The confessor should be quite firm in dealing with cases of disobedience to a superior, dissatisfaction, or grumbling.

The parish priest would do well, with regard to some of the abuses mentioned, to refrain from dealing with them personally, as otherwise he might exceed his authority. The better course is to refer the matter to the chaplain or Mother-Superior of the community, as the case may be, since they are the proper persons to deal with the abuse. If the matter comes strictly under the seal of confession he should urge the Sister to make her confession to the chaplain; should she obstinately refuse to do so, it would seem that she lacks the necessary dispositions, and that consequently absolution should be refused.[1]

[1] Priests who have to undertake the direction of religious, or advise as to a vocation, will find much to help them in S. C. Hughson, *The Fundamentals of the Religious State*

CHAPTER V

THE CONFESSIONS OF SCRUPULOUS PENITENTS

Definition and origin of the term ' scrupulous '—Distinction between scrupulous penitents and those possessing a tender conscience—The signs of scrupulosity—The origin of scruples —The treatment of scrupulous penitents—Rules to be given in direction.

THOSE penitents who fail to distinguish between what is allowed and what is forbidden, and who are constantly tormented by the fear of sinning where there is really no ground for such fear, are termed scrupulous. The word scruple is derived from the Latin word *scrupulus*, which is a diminutive of *scrupus*, and means a little rough, sharp stone.

The confessor should be on his guard against confusing those penitents who have a tender conscience with those that are scrupulous. A person may be reasonably anxious not to offend God in the least degree, and yet be quite free from scruples. Again, there is the case of the person who has been converted from a life of sin, who, after making his confession, is dissatisfied with the way he has made it, and wishes to repeat his confession. This may happen two or three times without his necessarily being considered scrupulous. If, however, he persists after this, he should be told not to look into his past life any more, and to lay aside all scruples and doubts. An exception is made with those penitents

who have been in the habit of concealing sins in confession, and they may be allowed to mention sins which come to their mind after the General Confession. Also those who are in doubt as to whether they have committed some particular sin or not are not for that reason to be considered scrupulous, as the doubt may be absolutely or relatively reasonable.

We must remember that scrupulosity is a more or less well defined psychological condition, consequently a penitent is not scrupulous because he has a scruple occasionally. A confessor can rarely tell at once if he has to deal with a scrupulous penitent ; when his suspicions are aroused he must watch his penitent carefully before forming a definite opinion, for 'as it is dangerous to treat a scrupulous person according to general rules, it is injurious to guide others by the rules applicable only to the scrupulous.' [1] The penitent himself often confuses scrupulosity and a tender conscience, and so should rely upon the judgement of his director. Some penitents are scrupulous on one point and lax on others ; these need special care and attention on the part of the confessor.

The following is a clear analysis of the signs by which a scrupulous penitent may be discovered : '(*a*) That, upon slight grounds, or none at all, he changes his judgement, holding the same thing to be allowable one moment, and forbidden the next ; (*b*) that he fears to commit sin by doing something which a competent confessor has already told him to be allowed and which he sees other conscientious men do and which he himself would, in his own judgement, consider to be allowed if he were not obliged or did not wish to do it at that

[1] cp. Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 545–55. These authors have been freely consulted in what follows

time ; (*c*) that he is agitated for fear he should sin, and cannot account to himself for this anxiety ; (*d*) that he clings obstinately to his own judgement, placing no confidence in the decisions of learned men, or the confessor ; (*e*) that he repeatedly asks whether a thing is allowed, although he has several times received an answer on the point ; (*f*) that he ponders over circumstances connected with an act which exercise no influence at all upon the moral value of the action, and which other men generally disregard altogether ; (*g*) that he holds for a sin that which the most conscientious men commonly do without thinking of sin ; (*h*) that he is perpetually anxious about his confessions, lest they should be invalid, although the confessor has declared them to be valid, even after a careful repetition of the confessions has already taken place.' [1]

Father V. Raymond, who has made a special study of this subject, and was himself at one time seriously afflicted with scruples, gives the following vivid description of the state of mind of such sufferers :

'The scrupulous,' he says, 'seem to have their thoughts always in a tangle. They have so much to say, so many and such important points to expose, that they cannot control themselves sufficiently to take them one by one. They must explain absolutely everything as though their cure depended upon all this detail. They have examined every point of their subject, made many notes, and, as far as their troubled state allows them, they have collected all this matter together.'

He then gives one of his own cases as an illustration :

A person was recommended to me who, outside his work, could think of nothing but his troubles of conscience. He

[1] This analysis is taken from Schieler-Heuser, and is based upon that given by S. Alphonsus.

spent a good deal of the night putting his difficulties into writing, as, having to work for his living, he could not find time enough in the day. After having heard his troubles, I asked him to leave with me what he had written, and I was presented with *five* copy-books. I told him I should do my best to restore his peace of mind, provided that outside our interviews he should give no attention to his troubles whatever. He promised, and went away. Three weeks later he returned in a sad and discouraged state. He brought with him *seven* fresh manuscripts, and confessed that the labour of writing these had brought on a state of physical and moral exhaustion, and also an increase of troubles. Within a few weeks he had worked at fever heat to write these twelve books descriptive of his scruples, and the result was that he got gradually worse. He one day admitted that within the past three or four years he must have filled about a hundred such copy-books. A few weeks after seeing me, he wrote that he was improving. 'I force myself,' he wrote, 'to do all that you recommended. I find I can obey more easily than I used to, and if only I can continue to obey I have hopes of ridding myself of my dreadful scruples.' He did not here take into account that both scruples and obedience would follow the course of his malady. He did not see the connection between them.

He continues and concludes his description of the scrupulous as follows :

The scrupulous are constantly thinking of their state without ever being able to satisfy themselves as to their mode of expressing what they feel. They become more and more confused. They find themselves in a torrent of impressions and ideas that rush and tumble together in the utmost disorder.

According to the intensity of their malady grows the need to discuss their scruples and doubts. Some will seem to enjoy a relative calm or even a decided pleasure in relating their experience, whether by word of mouth or in writing ; and so it is a great joy to them to find a willing listener who can understand them and give advice and consolation.

But in the majority of cases it is not easy to convey what is experienced to others, however friendly they may be. To open the mind to another is the one burning desire of the troubled victim, because this is the one means of obtaining solace. But, on the other hand, it is impossible to do it on account

of their state of depression, physical, intellectual, and moral, and also on account of the greater or less confusion that exists in the sufferer's mind.

It will happen sometimes that one has hardly begun the story of his woes when some observation or question from his listener will make him give up and change the subject altogether. He will abandon his subject, and throw himself into a fresh one with as much eagerness as he had commenced. In some cases this changeableness occurs without provocation ; some personal impression or some new idea suddenly alters the train of thought.

To satisfy their craving for talking about themselves it would be necessary to allow them to continue their interviews not merely for hours and days, but for months and even years. Naturally the subject-matter is always the same, the theme is the same, the ideas are the same. The only variation is to be found in the choice of expression and the construction of phrases. When all is told, it simply amounts to the one fact that they really suffer in mind as well as in body.

Fénelon well understood the dangers of the evil when he said that scrupulousness is in no sense connected with the degrees of perfection in the Christian life. It is rather, he says, a fault and a weakness for which one must humble oneself before God, rather than glory in it. For this state of conscience makes one act on feeble and uncertain conjecture, and makes one groundlessly suppose there may be sin where there is not, and makes one hesitate when there is no cause for fear. All these faults are opposed to sound reason. They are faults that are justly reckoned amongst the greatest dangers to which a soul can be exposed.

The learned Gerson knew well how deplorable it is to be subject to scruples. He said that a scrupulous conscience often causes more evil than a lax one, insomuch as it leads one along a road that cannot reach our true goal of salvation, but simply causes weariness, and usually discouragement, if not despair.[1]

It is now generally recognized that true scrupulosity is almost always a pathological condition ; it is akin to those states of mind which are called by neurologists ' phobias,' the fear of walking across an open space, or of being left alone in the

[1] *Spiritual Director and Physician*, pp. 99 et seq.

dark; and treatment by an experienced neurologist ought to be advised in extreme cases. Father Raymond emphasizes the beneficial effect which may often be produced by the united efforts of the confessor and the physician.

'Every one,' he says, 'who enjoys good health, who is endowed with a well-balanced mind, good reasoning powers, and has control over the imagination and sensitiveness, is quite free from scruples. They are found in those that are affected in one or more of these faculties. And for such the scruple is a real malady, and not by any means imaginary, though it is at the same time true that the sensitive imagination plays a great part in falsifying the judgements of the intellect.

'There are many degrees and many various effects in this affliction, and there may be various physical causes to account for it.

'Whilst scruples seem to arise chiefly from a disturbance of the nervous system, they may also spring from organic derangement, from functional troubles, or from constitutional defect. There may also be causes which escape even scientific observation.

'Our first step must be to discover the cause of this malady which is termed "scrupulousness," and which sometimes appears as a monomania, sometimes as a well-marked form of mental alienation.

'The medical man must decide upon the means of removing or modifying the principle of the morbid state, and the physician of the soul should also take this into account to assist him in the spiritual part of the cure.

'The rules of conduct prescribed by theologians for confessors in the direction of the scrupulous aim always at this object, and must be applied without conflicting with medical prescription, the purpose of which is to remedy the physical cause of the mental defects.

'Scruples arise from a physical malady, and vary according to the nature and intensity of that malady. Not to admit this would be to take an effect for a cause. It would be going counter to facts that belong to the sphere of experience, since it is matter of observation that scruples rise and fall in intensity according to the disease. And though this disease may escape recognition or analysis, it does not follow that it is purely imaginary. It is no more so than the various disorders

of the nervous system, and, in fact, proceeds from a similar source—namely, from a morbid physical influence. This influence must be recognized, as we recognize the mutual action between soul and body, and the relationship that exists between the workings of the brain and the operations of the soul.'

It is instructive to observe that, at least from the time of S. Alphonsus Liguori, writers on spiritual direction have been thoroughly alive to the dangers of scrupulosity, and their methods of dealing with this distressing condition appear extraordinarily modern when we compare them with the writings of post-war neurologists. The following advice to confessors, which is based upon S. Alphonsus, could hardly be bettered, and that in spite of our increased knowledge of neuropathic conditions.

The first step is to ascertain if the penitent is scrupulous in all matters, or if there are particular things which give rise to scruples. When this point has been settled, the penitent should be told that he must put every confidence in his confessor, and believe him—even against his own judgement—when the confessor assures him that a certain action is not sinful. It is absolutely essential that the penitent should promise strict obedience to his director; otherwise no cure can possibly be effected. Kindness is advised in most cases in dealing with scrupulous penitents, but there are occasions when severity is necessary.

To doubts, let the confessor answer *without hesitation* and *without much questioning*, and interpret everything according to the more lenient view. He should, in most cases, give no reasons for his answers, lest the penitent might think that after all his scruples were not to be despised, and because the latter will weigh these reasons and make them doubtful by opposing to them his futile objections. Nor should he listen to new doubts and scruples, but when he is morally certain that a

scruple is in question he should sometimes, without listening to the penitent, order him to lay aside all anxiety and quickly to receive Holy Communion.[1]

The following rules are recommended to be given to a scrupulous penitent :

(1) He must be convinced that he really is scrupulous, but that scruples by no means lead to holiness ; he should, therefore, firmly resolve to combat them. (2) He should pray with great humility, confidence, and resignation to the divine Will for light and peace of conscience. (3) He should cling to one and the same confessor, in whose learning and goodness he trusts, and whom he must obey most strictly, as the representative of God. The confessor's decisions must be regarded as final by the penitent. Never should the penitent seek a solution of his doubts elsewhere than from his confessor. He should abide by this decision if doubts again arise. (4) He must accustom himself to consider God as infinitely good, and occupy himself with thoughts which awaken confidence in God, avoiding any which have the opposite effect. (5) He should flee idleness, so that the devil may always find him busy. He should avoid intercourse with scrupulous people, as also reading about things which excite scruples. (6) As soon as a scruple arises he should banish it, and think of something else, as if it were a temptation to evil. He should not allow his mind to dwell upon his scruples by opposing reasons to them, but energetically lay aside all doubt. (7) He must not give way to a scruple by obeying its suggestions ; on the contrary, he must act boldly in opposition to the scruple, and not fear that he will sin, even when his conscience does not seem to him to be very clear about the matter. For a scrupulous person it should suffice to know that he must despise his scruples, and that, in spite of them, he may do any act of which he cannot say *positively at first sight* that it is a sin ; and that, in order to commit a mortal sin, it is necessary for him to be able to say at once, without hesitation and without examination, that the thing in question is forbidden under mortal sin. (8) Let him be assured that he is by no means obliged to confess his doubts ; indeed, that this is not even useful and must be forbidden. *Doubtful sins* a scrupulous person is *certainly* not bound to confess. Speculative doubts the scrupulous person is not bound to regard ; for what for

[1] Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, p. 551.

others is a reasonable motive of investigation is not so for the scrupulous. From this results :

(1) For a scrupulous person an act which he does not recognize at once as a sin is not a sin ; (2) he may do that which he sees other conscientious people do without scruple, even when it is contrary to his own judgement or his own opinion ; (3) scruples are, for him, no reasonable ground for doing or for not doing an action, or for hesitating ; and this applies to the doubt as to whether a scruple or a valid reason is in question.[1]

[1] Schieler-Heuser, *Theory and Practice*, p. 552. See also the chapter on 'The Scrupulous Conscience' in my *Belief and Conduct*

PART VI

THE CARE OF THE SICK AND DYING

CHAPTER I

THE VISITATION OF THE SICK AND DYING

The obligation to visit the sick—Precautions to be observed in attending infectious cases—The priest's great opportunity—A clear knowledge of one's duties necessary—Certain difficulties to be overcome—The relationship between the clergy and medical practitioners—Our people to be taught when to send for a priest—The ultimate object to be aimed at in visiting the sick—A consideration of the Order for the Visitation of the Sick.

THE obligation to visit and care for the sick binds under divine law, and a priest would sin mortally both by refusing to visit the sick and also by neglecting to minister to them during his visits according to the Mind of Christ and His Church.

An urgent sick call, whether it be in the daytime or at night, should be responded to at once. No matter how important the business of the priest may be, when he is called upon to visit a person at the point of death he should leave his own affairs, and prepare himself to give the consolations of the Church to the dying person. He should not be afraid of exposing himself to danger, as might happen in attending infectious cases, or in ministering to the dying on the field of battle, but, trusting in God, go forth to perform his duty. The great importance of visiting the dying is shown by the fact that S. Alphonsus rules that a priest may even leave the altar when he is saying Mass, in order

to give the Last Sacraments, provided, of course, there is no other priest available for the duty.[1]

INFECTIOUS CASES

In visiting infectious cases and administering the Last Sacraments to persons suffering from infectious diseases the priest should observe the same precautions as those adopted by medical men. Not to use proper precautions is positively criminal. We now know that most infectious diseases are caused by micro-organisms. These organisms may be communicated in various ways to a healthy person; they may be obtained directly from the sick person, or from infected articles, clothing, etc., or by inoculation. Moreover, a healthy person may himself, at the time, be immune from infection, but he can *serve as a carrier* of the micro-organism to other healthy persons who are not immune. This is why it is criminal for a priest to neglect proper precautions. It is worse than rank folly for him to say that he has no fear of infection, and to disregard all methods of preventing it; if he escapes himself (which he does not deserve to do), he may be the means of carrying disease and death to others. The degree of infection, of course, varies, some diseases (such as smallpox and typhus) being very infectious, while others (such as consumption and leprosy) are only moderately infectious. Our remarks apply chiefly to very infectious diseases, but reasonable precaution should be taken in all cases.

Smallpox and typhus are diseases so readily communicated to others that special precautions are necessary in attending such cases. We may consider smallpox as typical, since the precautions

[1] S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. v, n. 354.

to be observed are as elaborate as will be found in any disease.

The priest has a twofold duty to perform. He is bound by the obligations of his sacred office to visit the infected person; he is also bound by his duty to himself and to his fellow men to employ the necessary safeguards against infection. In the case of an epidemic the first duty of the priest is to be vaccinated. Vaccination consists of the introduction of prepared calf-lymph into the system, by which the person becomes infected with cowpox or vaccinia. This slight disease is overcome by the body cells generating an antitoxin, which kills the toxin or poison of cowpox. The antitoxin, however, remains in his body after recovery from the slight disease of vaccinia, and not only prevents another infection with cowpox, but also will prevent infection with smallpox. This immunity, successful in quite ninety per cent. of cases, will last for several years, but in times of epidemic re-vaccination should always be performed.

When visiting a smallpox case the priest should wear an antiseptic suit which covers the whole body, including the feet. If the patient is at an isolation hospital the suit will doubtlessly be provided, but it can be obtained for a moderate cost from a medical stores. It is well to make a preliminary inquiry, when the Blessed Sacrament is to be given, as to whether the patient can swallow, and how far vomiting is present. In any case, only a very small Particle should be taken into the sick room. We assume, in the directions here given, that the communion will be administered in one kind only, since it would be both dangerous and irreverent to give it either in both kinds or by intinction.

We will now suppose that the priest is ready to

enter the sick room. He is wearing his antiseptic suit, the sleeves of which are tied around his wrists, and, if he wishes, upon his hands he wears a pair of surgeon's operating gloves. In one pocket is placed the pyx containing the Blessed Sacrament. This should be wrapped in a corporal; the pyx ought *not* to be suspended around the neck by a cord on this occasion, nor ought it to be contained in its usual case. Only those things are to be taken into the room which can be easily disinfected or destroyed. Another pocket contains the Holy Oil, if the sacrament of Extreme Unction is to be administered. The oil should be carried in the usual small silver vessel containing cotton-wool, upon which a few drops of the oil have been poured. The vessel ought not to be enclosed in a case, and after the anointing the cotton-wool is burned and the vessel disinfected. It is best not to wear a stole, unless it can be boiled or destroyed after use, and *no book* should be taken into the sick room. The priest should not remain in the room longer than is absolutely necessary, and the Blessed Sacrament and Unction should be administered as briefly as possible, all prayers which are not absolutely essential being omitted.

After the patient has made his confession and received absolution, the priest proceeds to administer the Viaticum. The sick person should lie on his back, and the priest drop the Particle into his mouth, taking care not to touch the patient while so doing. On no account must the priest receive the ablutions. If the sacrament of Extreme Unction is administered, the priest should carefully wrap all cotton-wool, etc., that is used in paper, so that it may be burned as soon as possible. He should also take care never to touch his own face with his hands while in the sick room.

The ministrations of the priest being finished, he places the pyx, the vessel which contained the Holy Oil, the corporal, and any other articles which may have been used, into a basin of water, in which they are boiled from ten to fifteen minutes. Before leaving the house he should wash his hands in water containing mercuric chloride, and his suit will also be disinfected. He must not shake hands with any one after he has been disinfected, nor should he open the door himself when leaving the house.

All these precautions apply to typhus as well as smallpox; in fact the former is considered the more infectious. The priest should keep as far away from a typhus patient as possible while engaged in his ministrations, and avoid standing between him and the open fireplace. Scarlet fever, although a children's disease, sometimes attacks adults; it is very infectious, and priests should observe full precautions when visiting scarlet fever.

Diphtheria is a disease which usually attacks children. It is caused by a definite bacillus, and is infectious; the infection, however, is not so readily transmitted as in smallpox, typhus, and scarlet fever. The bacilli are found in the saliva of the patient; from this source the bed-clothes, hands of the person suffering from the disease, and articles in the room become infected. Priests visiting diphtheria patients should avoid getting too close to them; they are apt to cough suddenly, and in so doing may deposit their infected saliva upon his clothes or person. He should also avoid touching anything which is in the sick room. Before leaving the house he should wash his hands in a solution of mercuric chloride; he may also place the basin upon the floor and dip the soles of

his boots in the solution, but this precaution is not usually observed.

Mercuric chloride may be obtained in tablet form from the chemist, and the bottle can be conveniently carried in the waistcoat pocket, and all that is necessary is to ask for a basin of water in which to dissolve the tablets; no soap should be used in washing the hands with this solution. As a matter of precaution, we may mention that mercuric chloride is a strong corrosive poison (its popular name is 'corrosive sublimate'), and after he has used it the priest should personally empty away the residue, so that an accident may be avoided. Warm or hot water should be used, as the salt is only sparingly soluble in cold water—6.57 parts in 100 parts of water at 10° C.

Tuberculosis of the lungs is, unfortunately, a very common disease. It is caused by the tubercular bacillus. The source of infection is the sputum which is coughed up from the lungs. When the sputum dries, the bacilli spread all over the room, and infect the furniture, bed-clothes, hangings, etc. They are soon killed by exposure to bright sunlight, but they flourish in the dark, ill-ventilated houses of the poor. Consumption is not a very infectious disease, and the healthy body resists the invasion of the bacilli. One should, however, avoid touching the patient, and the hands may be disinfected after a visit.

Influenza is a contagious disease, and the hands should be washed in mercuric chloride solution. Erysipelas is also contagious; it may be transferred from one person to another through an abrasion in the skin of the healthy person. Consequently, as a precaution, priests who have anointed those suffering from this disease should afterwards disinfect their hands. Anthrax is a

fairly common disease amongst those people who have to handle wool and skins of animals. It may be communicated in the same way as erysipelas, or by breathing the bacilli into the lungs. The priest should be careful not to touch anything in the room, and should disinfect his hands before leaving the house. These precautions should also be observed in visiting cases of cholera. Bubonic plague is sometimes met with in seaport towns ; it is very infectious, and the precautions to be observed are the same as those used when visiting smallpox patients.

DIFFICULTIES IN SICK VISITING

The advice given above with regard to visiting infectious cases may be used as an analogy. If it is necessary to have special knowledge for guarding the body, how much more important is it that the priest, when ministering to the soul, should thoroughly understand his duties ? Sick-visiting is the priest's great opportunity for converting lapsed souls to God. When disease lays its hand upon a man he is only too clearly reminded that he is but mortal, that the day must come when he will have to face his Maker, and render an account of his actions. In the solitude of his chamber he has time for serious reflection, his worldly activities are, for the time being, suspended ; he will in most cases welcome the visit of a priest, and be prepared to listen with greater attention than when in health to the serious claims of religion.

Since, then, the opportunity is so favourable, the priest should be thoroughly competent to lay hold on it. Yet, how many sick visits are barren in results simply because the priest has not known how to make use of the opportunity ! He goes to the house with only a vague idea as to what he ought

to do ; he has no definite method to use in order to lead the sick man to repentance and confession ; he feels thoroughly out of place, and often quite realizes that his visit is useless. What he does might equally well be done by a pious layman ; there is no exercise of the priestly office, because he has not had the necessary training in order to lead the sick person to understand the need of his priestly ministrations. Many clergy have told me that they have *never* been able to bring an uninstructed sick person to make his confession ; they regret that they have been unable to achieve this object, and wonder how it is that other priests are successful. The answer is plain. If we are to have any success in ministering to the sick we must have a clear idea of what we have to do, and also be prepared to do it when the time arrives. It must not be thought that these remarks are intended in any way as a wholesale disparagement of the work of our clergy ; they are rather made with the idea of emphasizing the difficulties we have to overcome, and the consequent need of a definite and clear method. The Roman Catholic priest has an easy task to perform in comparison with what we have to do, and all honour to our clergy when they are able to overcome the difficulties they have to face.

The methods here suggested to be employed in the treatment of the sick and dying are based upon personal experience, and the results seem to warrant their publication.

We must first consider certain difficulties which stand in the way of an effective ministration to the sick, for by understanding them we shall be able to adopt efficient methods for their removal. The majority of people have an entirely wrong idea, or, what is perhaps not quite so bad in its

effects, no idea at all, of the priest's duty in visiting the sick. The tradition remains that it is not right and proper for a person to die without being visited by a clergyman; but apart from the vague idea that the patient is comforted by seeing the priest, there is no definite object in the sick call. It is expected that the priest will go into the sick room, make a few cheery remarks on general subjects, and before leaving suggest a few words of prayer. The weeping relatives then kneel around the bed; the priest prays 'for this our brother lying on a bed of sickness'; says he will call again to-morrow, and leaves the house amidst great satisfaction felt by all parties concerned. A glance at the order of service provided in the Prayer Book for the Visitation of the Sick will show that such a method of procedure is far from the mind of the Church, and we, as priests of the Church, must be mindful of our ordination vows and strive to banish such erroneous doctrine from our parishes.

Again, it very often happens that the priest is called in when the sick person is either unconscious or at the point of death, when it would be useless or dangerous for him to attempt any definite ministration. Another serious difficulty often presents itself, and requires careful and tactful treatment. The priest is informed by the relatives that the sick person is beyond all hope of recovery, the doctor has 'given him up,' and they try to extract a promise from the priest that he will not tell the sick person that he is going to die. The priest would be quite within his rights to refuse to give such a promise; how can a person be prepared for death if he does not know that he is going to die? But it is not always wise to do this. The sick person must have our first consideration; and our aim is to obtain an entrance into the sick-room

so that we may give him the benefit of our ministrations. The difficulty may usually be overcome by pointing out that while there may be no need to declare in so many words that the sick person is going to die, yet the patient must already know that he is seriously ill, and no possible harm can result from telling him what he already knows, in order to aid him by our ministrations.

We ought also to be on our guard against allowing people to impose conditions upon us. The priest, like the medical practitioner, is a professional man, and it is part of his professional duty to visit the sick. The very fact that we are called in to a case presupposes that those who ask for our services have confidence in our ability properly to perform them, and we ought not to be hampered in our duty by having conditions imposed upon us which our experience has taught us are unreasonable. We shall deal more fully later with the professional aspect of the priest's work.

It sometimes happens that serious inconvenience is experienced from instructions given by the medical man in charge of the case. He has given orders that the patient is to have perfect quiet, and no one is to be admitted into the sick-room ; this prohibition either the doctor himself, the nurse, or the relatives extend to include the priest. Here we have a person seriously ill, and the priest powerless to help him ; what is to be done ? The answer involves the whole subject of the relationship between the clergy and the medical profession.

The author can state, from a large and intimate acquaintance with medical practitioners, that generally speaking there is no serious complaint to be made on either side ; priests and doctors in most instances are able to work quite amicably together.

There are, however, exceptions, and it is with these that we have to deal. In country parishes the priest and the doctor usually know each other quite well, but in large towns it is very different ; more often than not the parish priest and the various doctors who attend cases in his parish never meet. This is surely a great pity ; much misunderstanding and irritation might be avoided if the priest and the doctor knew each other, and had some definite understanding about working together. The present author makes a point of getting to know all the medical men who visit in his parish. This is not difficult. Suppose a visit is paid to a house, and I am informed that the doctor has forbidden any one to enter the sick-room, I at once call upon the doctor in question—if possible about half an hour before his evening surgery hours. We can then talk the matter over, and I have an opportunity of explaining why I am anxious to visit his patient. If the doctor has really included the priest in his directions (which is by no means always the case) it is generally because he has the idea that the priest will upset the patient and make him nervous and despondent. Doctors are by no means entirely to blame for this ; sometimes a priest ill-instructed in his work does more harm than good by his visits. A personal interview will almost always put the matter right ; the doctor will now see that you understand your professional duties quite as well as he understands his own, and will respect you accordingly. There is no question of crossing swords with the medical profession ; but it ought to be clearly understood that, at the lowest estimate, we have just as strong claims as the doctors, and we should not lightly give way on such an important matter.

Another strong reason why we should work hand in hand with the medical profession is that their advice is invaluable as to the advisability of administering the Last Sacraments.

Without wishing to be discourteous to brother priests, one would like to point out that it is not part of a priest's duties to suggest remedies or medicines to patients already receiving medical attention; there is nothing more calculated to irritate a medical man than to hear, 'The Rev. A. B. has suggested that I should try a bottle of so-and-so.'

We must recognize, then, that we have a great amount of misconception to correct with regard to the popular idea of the priest's visits to the sick. Our people must learn that the priest is a spiritual physician and not a 'quack,' and that he has a definite duty to perform. They must be taught that it is of the greatest importance to notify sick cases as early as possible, so that the sick person may be able to derive benefit from the priest's visit. Our own faithful may be easily taught all that is necessary in Guild classes and in sermons, while the parish magazine may be used as the medium for conveying the needful information to those who are not so intimately connected with the Church. It seems a great pity that the parish magazine is not used more for instruction; it affords a splendid opportunity not only for explaining matters connected with sick visiting, but also of teaching about baptism, marriage, confirmation, etc. There should be, in addition, a permanent announcement both on the church notice board, and amongst the list of services in the parish magazine, that notices of sick calls or private baptisms may be given at any hour of the day or night, and will receive the immediate atten-

tion of the clergy. By this means our people are constantly reminded of the importance attached to such matters.

PERSONS IN DANGER OF DEATH

There can be no doubt as to the ultimate object to be aimed at in the visitation of the sick. It is the plain intention of the Prayer Book that the priest should instruct the sick person on the means to be employed in order to meet his Maker, and to give him spiritual comfort and consolation in his last moments. This is to be brought about through the sacraments of the Church. A layman could very well pray for the sick person, but he needs more than that ; hence the necessity of his being visited by a priest.

There are three sacramental means to be employed in preparing a person for death. First, he must be brought to repentance, he must realize that he has sinned both by commission and omission, and with the realization of wrong-doing there must be a hearty sorrow for sin and a desire for reconciliation. So the Prayer Book directs that the priest must first inform himself that the sick person has a right conception of the Faith, ' the minister shall rehearse the Articles of the Faith, saying thus, Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth ? ' etc. The reason for this is obvious ; unless a person has some knowledge of God, his Creator, he cannot understand the true meaning of sin as an act of rebellion against the will of his Creator. He must also believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save us from our sins ; otherwise he has no sufficient grounds for believing that his sins will be forgiven him. Finally, he must know that in the Holy Catholic Church God has given to His

ministers the power 'to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins.' It is for these reasons that the Creed is included in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick.

Having satisfied himself that the sick person has a sufficient knowledge of the Faith, the priest is ordered to 'examine whether he repent him truly of all his sins, and be in charity with all the world.' Certain specific directions then follow with regard to this examination: (i) The sick person must be exhorted 'to forgive, from the bottom of his heart, all persons that have offended him'; (ii) 'and if he hath offended any other, to ask them forgiveness'; (iii) 'where he hath done injury or wrong to any man, that he make amends to the uttermost of his power.' The priest is also directed to advise him as to the disposal of his goods; the sick man should make his will if he has not already done so, and should declare what debts he owes and what is owed to him. Another rubric orders that 'the minister should not omit earnestly to move such sick persons as are of ability to be liberal to the poor.'

These preliminaries being ended, the priest is now in a position to hear the penitent's confession, and to give him the consolation of absolution, so the well-known rubric follows: 'Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort.' This, then, is the first duty of the priest towards the sick person; he must bring him to repentance and absolve him from his sins.

When this has been done, the penitent should

next be prepared to receive the Viaticum, the spiritual food and medicine which is to strengthen and comfort him in his last great struggle, and to prepare him to meet his God. The Viaticum can, of course, be given to persons who have not received the sacrament of confirmation, provided they understand the nature of the great blessing they are to receive. Finally, the priest should administer the sacrament of Extreme Unction, and when the sick person is at the point of death he should endeavour to be present in order to recite over him the prayers for the dying.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFESSIONS OF THE SICK

The instructed and uninstructed sick—Need of a strictly professional attitude—Preliminary inquiries necessary—The sick person must be seen alone—Method of dealing with acute cases—Importance of asking questions during the confession—When Extreme Unction should precede the Viaticum—Method of dealing with chronic cases—Illustrations.

WE have stated that the priest's first object in visiting the sick is to teach the need of repentance and subsequent confession. We may conveniently divide our parishioners into two classes, the uninstructed and the instructed. The Rev. E. C. Linton makes a third distinction, the partially instructed, which class he defines as follows: 'By the partially instructed I mean those who have been taught the primary truths of Christianity as contained in the Catholic Creeds, but who have never received any instruction as to that power of absolving sinners which our Lord so solemnly and so tenderly committed to His Church.' [1] The present author is of the opinion that for all practical purposes these partially instructed people may be included under the wider term, 'uninstructed,' since the same difficulties present themselves in dealing with both classes. By the word, 'instructed,' then, we mean all those who have learned the meaning of the sacrament of Penance, and have

[1] *Notes on the Absolution of the Sick and Dying*, p. 48.

been in the habit of making their confession either in the past, or with regularity up to the time of their illness. The uninstructed are those who have never made use of the sacrament of Penance, and may or may not be ignorant of the teaching of the Church on the subject.

We will deal first with the methods to be employed in visiting the uninstructed. We must always keep in view the misconceptions which are present in the minds both of the uninstructed person himself and his relatives. Our object is to obtain a good confession from the sick person; but he has no idea, or at the best only a vague idea, that he will be expected to confess his sins. If he has thought about confession at all he has simply considered it to be the practice of superstitious Roman Catholics; in other words, his conception of confession is entirely *impersonal*. We have to make it real and personal to himself.

This can only be done by the priest adopting the strictly professional attitude to which previous allusion has been made. We will illustrate our meaning from the medical profession. A doctor visits a case *on his own terms*. When he undertakes the charge of a patient he expects that his orders will be carried out; he advises what is to be done for the sick person, and prescribes his remedies. No one considers the doctor is presuming in the matter, his position is recognized; he has a quiet dignity and assurance of manner, arising out of confidence in his ability and training. The priest should, with obvious modifications, adopt the same attitude. He will give his directions in an unassuming but perfectly firm manner; he takes charge of the case when he enters the sick-room, and expects to be obeyed.

It may be objected that the medical man has no

difficulty from the very fact that his position is assured, while the priest, at least with the uninstructed, has no assured position. This is quite true, but experience shows that in the great majority of cases if the priest will only act as if his status were recognized the people with whom he has to deal will readily fall in with his ideas and carry out his wishes. The mistake made is to forget our status, and to allow people to treat us on their terms and not on our own. It is hoped that this important matter will be made quite clear by what follows.

When a priest receives a sick call he should not at once proceed to the patient's room. There are certain preliminary inquiries to be made which will be of the greatest help in dealing with the sick person. The first step is to ask to see some responsible person from whom information may be obtained. From this person the priest should ascertain the *physical condition* of the patient. He would inquire the nature of the illness, its duration, whether the condition of the patient is serious or not ; is there danger of death ? He should also ask if the patient is at the present time conscious, or if there is any mental derangement, however slight. Many sick people ' wander in their mind,' and if the priest does not know this beforehand he is liable to be led astray in his ministrations. It is obvious how valuable this information may be. The priest has now a clear idea of the physical condition of the person he has to visit, and will, before entering the sick-room, be able to determine on general lines the methods to be adopted in dealing with the case.

Still more important inquiries, however, have to be made with regard to the *spiritual condition* of the patient. He next asks if the person has been

baptized ; if so, has he received the sacrament of confirmation ? Has he been in the habit of making his communion and attending church ? It is not difficult to classify the patient from the answers received. A great amount of useful information may be obtained under the appearance of general conversation about the sick person, without any suspicion of questioning. Relatives, among the poor at any rate, are generally quite willing to talk about their sick, and if the priest listens to them with intelligence he may gather a large amount of information about their habits which will be of great use subsequently in hearing their confession. A word of warning is necessary here ; too much reliance must not be placed upon what is heard from this third person. It is best to pay close attention to what is said, while at the same time keeping a perfectly open mind until the patient has been seen and one's own opinion formed.

So much for the preliminary inquiry. The priest is now in full possession of the information he needs, and can proceed to minister to the sick person. It is essential that he should *see the patient alone* ; otherwise his visit is perfectly useless. He can almost always achieve this object by saying, ' Now, if you will leave us alone for a time I will see what I can do.' This should be done at the very beginning of the visit, and said in a perfectly natural manner. If there is only one person in attendance the priest might say, ' I shall be about ten minutes with Mr. A. ; will you see that we are not interrupted while I am with him ? ' If, on the other hand, he finds several people in the room who do not show any indication of leaving, he should, after wishing them ' good day,' at once notify his intention of seeing the patient alone.

This quiet assumption of authority has always succeeded when employed by the author. If serious objection were taken to his seeing the patient alone, he would first try every possible persuasion to overcome the difficulty, but if this failed he would refuse to continue to attend the case.

We must now distinguish between acute and chronic diseases, as the method of procedure in dealing with them is very different. In acute cases matter must be brought to a head as soon as possible. The same applies when ministering to a person in immediate danger of death. Pneumonia is a typical acute disease ; it runs a definite course, and the crisis is reached about the sixth to eighth day. Roughly speaking, one out of every six of these cases terminates fatally, and the mortality is higher amongst the poor. Alcoholics have always a poor chance of recovery.

Suppose you are called in to a case of pneumonia at the fourth or fifth day, there can be no question of delay ; the patient is rapidly approaching the crisis which may terminate fatally, and you must obtain repentance and confession as quickly as possible.[1] Do not be in the least *shy* ; assume from the first that, by God's help, you are going to succeed in obtaining the sick man's confession. Even if you fail you have the satisfaction of knowing that you have done your best. One feels quite certain that many failures are due to the fact that the priest has not sufficient confidence in himself, and so fails to inspire confidence in his patient.

Begin by telling the person that his condition is serious. Do not do this in a manner calculated to frighten him. He knows already that he is seri-

[1] We offer the suggestions which follow in the hope that they will be of help particularly to young priests who have not had much experience in dealing with acute cases.

ously ill, and your remarks should show your sympathy with him in his trouble, and your desire to help him. Then point out to him that sickness is sent to us by God for our good ; that it may, in fact, be the means of obtaining eternal salvation. Here you could obtain an act of Faith by asking the person if he believed in God, in His goodness, love, etc.

You should then give a very brief instruction on sin. Tell your patient that sin is the only thing that can keep him from God. Assume that he has committed grievous sin by using such expressions as, ' We are all apt when in health to forget God ; we seek our own pleasures, such as drinking, gambling, etc., and often altogether neglect God.' Then follows an exhortation to repentance, and a positive assurance of God's forgiveness. ' How to obtain forgiveness ' introduces the subject of confession. Explain very briefly the doctrine of Penance, taking care to emphasize the need of a complete confession, and the absolute inviolability of the seal. The latter should be taught in a very simple manner. You might say, ' Now remember all you say is in the strictest confidence, it is between God and ourselves ; you can trust me absolutely, I am bound by the most sacred obligations never to reveal to any one a word of what you say ; even if you had committed murder I could never speak about it.'

The time has now arrived for the sick person to make his confession, and, if no serious difficulty has previously arisen, the whole of the preliminary instruction ought not to have occupied more than ten minutes. First say a very short prayer (this may be omitted if there is any risk of fatiguing the patient), and then tell him to say after you, ' I confess to God Almighty and to you that I have

committed the following sins,' or some other convenient short form of confession. Hear the confession by asking questions. It is practically impossible to obtain the confession of an uninstructed person by any other means; it is also very easy for him, since he can answer ' Yes ' or ' No ' to the questions asked. Use the Ten Commandments as the basis of your examination ; it is almost essential to commit to memory a series of questions which will cover all the mortal sins. One should begin with inquiries as to the more common sins : ' Have you neglected to say your prayers morning and evening ? ' etc. By this means the penitent gains confidence as the confession proceeds, and will the more readily acknowledge his more serious faults.

It sometimes helps the penitent for you at once to assume that he has committed certain common and lesser sins. ' I suppose you have often neglected going to church when you might have gone ?' If the penitent seems inclined to conceal sins of a shameful nature, such as drunkenness and impurity, be gentle with him, remembering that he has had very little instruction with regard to the integrity of confession ; impress upon him the absolute inviolability of the seal, and put the question in another form. It is a good plan, at the conclusion of the confession, to say, ' Now tell me, what do you consider has been the most serious wrong you have done ? '

Finally, do not question in great detail. Remember that, in the case of a sick person, the confession may be perfectly valid, even if not absolutely complete. All that is needed is to satisfy oneself that no sin has wilfully been concealed. The penance given should be very light, and if the penitent is not fatigued the priest should spend some little

time assuring him of God's forgiveness, and the great joy that must now come to him as the result of his confession. If the sick person has received favourably the ministrations of the priest in the manner here suggested he will understand quite well the meaning of the sacrament of Penance, and, should he recover, every effort ought to be made to keep him in touch with the Church, and to lead him to a regular and open confession of the Catholic Faith. A priest once told me with great pride that he could get people to make their confession without their knowing that they were doing it. One would venture the opinion that there is little cause here for self-congratulation.

In ministering to the uninstructed sick in acute cases it is often impossible to give the Viaticum or Unction, the reason, of course, being that they are not physically fit to receive the necessary preliminary instruction. Sometimes, however, the conditions are favourable, and one or both of these sacraments may be received. The question here arises, suppose the priest finds that there is time to prepare the patient to receive either the Viaticum or Extreme Unction, but not both, to which ought he to give the preference ? The question is difficult to answer, because we cannot appeal to a continued tradition in the matter.

As a personal opinion, I should advocate the preference being given to the sacrament of Extreme Unction for the following reasons : (*a*) One of the objects for which this sacrament was instituted was, if God so wills, that the recipient should be restored to bodily health, hence the dying person ought to have the benefit of this remedy if at all possible. (*b*) It seems to be in accordance with primitive custom. This is on the authority of O'Kane, the Roman Catholic authority on the

rubrics, who says: 'In fact, Martène shows by abundant testimonies that, according to the ancient discipline of the Church, Extreme Unction was usually administered before the Viaticum.'[1] (*c*) Finally, for those who consider the rubrics of the Roman rite of some authority, we may quote the following rubric in the 'Ordo ministrandi sacramentum Extremae Unctionis': 'In quo illud in primis ex generali Ecclesiae consuetudine observandum est, ut si tempus, et infirmi conditio permittat, ante Extremam Unctionem, Poenitentiae et Eucharistiae sacramenta infirmis praebeantur.' The words 'ut si tempus . . . permittat' justify Extreme Unction being administered before the Viaticum in cases of necessity. When the priest has plenty of time at his disposal he will, of course, instruct the patient both on Holy Communion and Extreme Unction, and administer the Viaticum, followed at once by Unction.

CHRONIC CASES

We now proceed to a consideration of chronic cases, of which consumption and cancer are typical. Here our task is not only easier, but more likely to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion, for we have plenty of time at our disposal, and matters need not be hurried, as in the case of acute diseases. The priest should begin by trying to gain the confidence of the sick person. It is often wise not even to speak about religion during the first few visits, particularly if the patient is inclined to be suspicious or even antagonistic to the Faith. The particular disease from which he is suffering is always a matter of interest to the sick person,

[1] J. O'Kane, *The Rubrics of the Roman Ritual*, chap. xv, n. 848.

and forms a good introduction to further conversation. He should be encouraged to talk about his trade, his family, and so forth, and from this he may be led to speak about his past life. In this way the priest may obtain much information that will be of use to him at a later time. The best means of gaining a person's confidence in oneself is to let him do most of the talking ; a good listener is always appreciated, and the priest's aim should be rather to encourage his patient to talk, than himself to carry on a vigorous monologue.

When a friendly relationship has been established the subject of religion should be introduced. The priest might interest the sick person by describing to him the church, the various organizations in the parish, and so on. The patient will generally respond by giving his views on religion in general and the Church in particular. He will also, probably, state his disbelief in ' High Church ' practices and suchlike matters. The priest has here the opportunity required. He should tell the sick person that he quite understands that he is unable to see eye to eye with him, but surely the reason is that he has never had the matter properly explained to him. Since it is only reasonable, before forming a definite opinion, to hear both sides of the question, will not the sick person allow him to give him some idea of the reason why we believe and act as we do ? Almost without exception the priest is now able to arrange for a definite course of instruction. These instructions should be quite clear and very simple ; they ought also to be brief (not longer than fifteen minutes) ; otherwise the patient may become tired, and disinclined to receive further instruction. The subject of penance should be dealt with as thoroughly as possible, and objections should always receive proper con-

sideration. Popular tracts, such as the Little Books on Religion, published by S.P.C.K., or the publications of the Church Literature Association, are often very useful in dealing with these cases. The sick person has a large amount of time on his hands, and can ponder over their contents at his leisure.

It is very important to teach clearly about the Blessed Sacrament and the great benefits to be obtained from a devout reception of the same. The priest should spare no trouble in affording the patient opportunities for frequent communion, even if he is considerably inconvenienced by taking the Blessed Sacrament to him at frequent intervals. One receives more than sufficient reward for one's pains in the spiritual joy and comfort given to the sufferer by his sacramental union with his Lord. In fact, one of the greatest joys which can come to a priest is the realization that he has been God's humble instrument in leading a person stricken with a deadly disease from sloth and indifference to a true realization of the love of God, and the comfort of the Christian sacraments. As the time of death approaches the priest should not delay too long before administering Extreme Unction, and his ministrations should be continued until the sick person is released from his sufferings.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

As an illustration of the practical application of the principles here advocated, I will describe two cases, acute and chronic, which have come within my own experience.

One morning, at 10.30, I received a sick call. The patient was a man of fifty-six years of age, a widower living in apartments in the parish. He was evidently dying, and, although he was perfectly conscious, I at once recognized that any

delay would be dangerous. Fortunately, I knew something of his past religious history. He had been in the parish about six months, and had attended Evensong fairly regularly during that period. He had never made his communion during the time, but he had told me that he had attended an Evangelical church on the outskirts of the city for some years, and usually made his communion at the great festivals. According to Mr. Linton's classification, he would be considered as one of the 'partially instructed.'

My first few questions brought out the fact that he realized he was near death, and I at once proceeded to explain to him the urgent necessity for making his final preparations. I found that his few remaining relatives had already been communicated with, but that they lived some distance away, and would probably not arrive in time to see him alive. As he was very poor, there was no need to make any arrangements about his worldly possessions. I then explained to him the nature of contrition, and suggested that he should make his confession, pointing out that the Prayer Book provided for this, and read to him the rubric in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick. He expressed his willingness to confess, provided I would help him to examine his conscience. After making his confession, which he did in a most satisfactory manner, I explained the great consolation to be obtained from a devout reception of the Blessed Sacrament, and he asked me to give him Holy Communion.

It happened that there was living in the same house an old lady who attended my church, and who was a practising Catholic, so I asked her to prepare a table with crucifix and candles, while I went to the church for the Blessed Sacrament.

On my return the room was properly prepared, and I administered the Viaticum to the dying man, and also, after a brief explanation of the nature and effects of the sacrament, gave him Extreme Unction. It was now about 11.15 a.m., and he was obviously sinking fast, so I commenced to recite the prayers for the dying. About a quarter of an hour later he became unconscious, and passed away quietly and without any pain at noon. The whole time from receiving the sick call until the death of the patient was only an hour and a half, yet one was able to do everything for his soul's comfort and to prepare him for death. This, surely, is a valuable illustration of how essential it is for every parish priest to reserve the Blessed Sacrament continually in his church.

The second case was that of a young man suffering from cancer. I was first called in on a Sunday evening at the conclusion of Evensong. I saw the man's wife, in order to obtain the necessary information before entering the sick room. She told me that her husband did not know that I had been sent for, and very much objected to seeing a priest; he was very ill indeed, and realized his condition. In fact the doctor had told him that he could not live more than two months; he actually lived six months after the doctor had given his opinion. From this information I concluded that the case was not one of extreme urgency, and, in view of the patient's antagonism to religion, I decided to postpone seeing him until the next day.

During our first interview I tried my very best to gain the man's confidence in myself, and spoke to him on quite general subjects, no mention being made of religion. He was an intelligent man and a good conversationalist, and after about a week

we knew each other quite well. One day, much to my delight, he informed me that he quite looked forward to my visits. This encouraged me to introduce the subject of religion. He was quite willing to discuss matters, and I soon found that he was very ignorant of even the elements of the Faith, and, in addition, considered himself to have been badly used by certain ' religious people,' and consequently was prejudiced against any outward profession of Christianity. I then suggested that he should allow me to give him a course of instruction. To this he consented, but informed me that under no consideration would he ever make his confession, as he held it to be morally wrong. Instruction was given practically every day for about a fortnight, and was supplemented by suitable tracts, etc., which I gave him to read.

His confession was somewhat difficult to obtain, but one day, while I was explaining the effect of certain sins upon the soul, he commenced to tell me about some of the sins he had committed. The opportunity seemed too good to be missed, so I pointed out to him that in reality he was already making his confession, and that it was far better to do it in the proper way and receive the benefit of absolution. This had the effect of removing what objections remained in his mind, and he made a good first confession about three weeks after I first saw him. Until the time of his death he received the Blessed Sacrament regularly each fortnight, and I was able to give him the Viaticum and Extreme Unction and attend him in his last moments.

This case was one of the most edifying that has ever come within my experience. The change in the man was simply wonderful ; he longed for his fortnightly communion, and showed great fortitude

and resignation under his sufferings, which were at times very severe. One was more than rewarded for the time and trouble taken in bringing him to the sacraments. The sequel is also interesting. His wife, shortly before her husband's death, made her first confession and returned to communion. I also had the pleasure of preparing his wife's sister for first confession and confirmation, and his three children were transferred from a Council school to our Church day schools.

CHAPTER III

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VIATICUM

Perpetual reservation of the Blessed Sacrament for the sick and dying—Advantages to be gained by the practice—Communion in private houses—Reservation a primitive and Catholic practice—Not forbidden by the Prayer Book—Enjoined by English Canon Law—Communion and reservation under one kind only—Method of reserving the Sacrament—Precautions to be observed with regard to altar breads—The renewal of the species, and the cleansing of the ciborium—Preparation of the sick room—The fast before communion considered—Occasions on which the Viaticum cannot be given—The conveyance of the Viaticum to the sick person—The order of service to be observed.

IT will be seen, from what has previously been written, that the author is in favour of the practice of reserving the Blessed Sacrament for the purpose of giving communion to the sick and dying. It would obviously be out of place in a book dealing primarily with the sacrament of Penance to attempt to describe in detail the causes which led to the inclusion of a series of rubrics regarding the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in the rejected Prayer Books of 1927–28. The presence of such rubrics showed that the need for reservation was recognized by the Church as a whole, and they would now be in operation if the mind of the Church had not been frustrated by Parliament. It does seem appropriate, however, that the case for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament for the sick and dying should be stated

here, since it is impossible for the present situation to continue indefinitely.

In presenting this case I would state at the outset that the *only* question involved is the necessity of reserving the Blessed Sacrament for the communion of the sick and dying. This definitely excludes the consideration of reservation in the open church for the purpose of adoration, also the use of the Blessed Sacrament for Exposition or Benediction. We may or may not consider these as legitimate developments of Eucharistic worship. We do, however, maintain the need for perpetual reservation, since at any hour of the day or night we may be called upon to give communion to a dying person ; and the present writer would further state his conviction that the practice of reservation is in no way disloyal to the existing formularies of the Church of England.

First we will consider the advantages to be gained by having the sacrament perpetually reserved. They are fairly obvious, and are well known to priests who always keep the Blessed Sacrament in their churches.

We must remember that the only alternative to reservation is a celebration of the Holy Mysteries in the sick room, and in many cases this is quite impossible. A priest could not say Mass under twenty minutes, and very often the communicant is so ill that the strain would be too much for him ; in urgent cases the patient might be dead before the time of communion arrived. Again, considerable time is wasted in making the proper arrangements for saying Mass, and these preparations are not only very disturbing to the sick person, but are also very inconvenient for those who are in attendance.

Reverence demands that the liturgy should be

performed 'decently and in order'; in almost every case it is impossible to do this in a sick room. Priests who have attempted to celebrate the Holy Mysteries in the small, badly-lighted rooms of the poor will bear out this statement. The room is overcrowded, the table provided is small, and the risk of accidents is overwhelming; yet all this may be avoided by the simple expedient of bringing the reserved Sacrament to the sick person. Out of the practice of celebrating in private houses has arisen that abomination and abuse, the 'clinical communion set.' A so-called chalice is provided, the size of an egg-cup, and a paten to match. Quite apart from the danger of using such toys, can it be considered right and proper that the dignity of this wondrous Mystery should be so degraded by employing such make-shift articles as these? If we are obliged to say Mass in private houses, let us at least use the proper holy vessels, and wear the vestments of the church.

Despite the fact that the Prayer Book provides for the Communion Service being said in the houses of the sick, it cannot be denied that the Catholic custom has always been to discourage such a practice. We freely admit that in the early Church, when persecution was rife, several instances may be given of the offering of the Holy Sacrifice in places other than a consecrated building; but the times were so exceptional that they afford no precedent for establishing the custom in these days. S. Basil (A.D. 370) condemns the practice in the following words, 'As the Word does not allow any common vessel to be brought into the holy places, neither does it permit the Holy Mysteries to be celebrated in a common house.' The Council of Laodicea (A.D. 365) passed

a canon to the effect that the Eucharist ought not to be offered in private houses. We find in England as early as A.D. 740 a law 'that no priest presume to celebrate Masses in houses, or in any other places but consecrated churches.' We contend, therefore, that celebrations in private houses should be avoided for three reasons: (1) They are most inconvenient; (2) they lead to irreverence; (3) they are contrary to Catholic custom.

Once we have admitted the case against the practice of saying Mass in the sick room, and have decided to adopt the Catholic custom of reservation, our troubles are at an end. The priest who has perpetual reservation need never fear a sick call, however unexpected, for he is in the position to administer the Blessed Sacrament at a moment's notice. It does not matter how many of his people are sick at the same time; he can, without any serious inconvenience, give them the Sacrament at frequent intervals, and can communicate several people the same morning, obviously an impossibility if he has to celebrate at each house. When communion is given with the reserved Sacrament he need have no fear of tiring the sick person, as the whole service does not occupy more than five minutes. He is not faced with the difficulty of having to say Mass twice or even three times on the same day, and he will never have to celebrate after having broken his fast—a valuable consideration for priests who recognize the strictness and importance of the fast before communion. There is always great danger in administering the chalice to persons lying in bed; this danger is entirely avoided by using the reserved Sacrament. Finally, he has the consolation of knowing that he is able to give the Blessed Sacrament without any danger of irreverence or possibility of accident.

We cannot, however, consider that expediency alone will warrant our reserving the Blessed Sacrament. It is also necessary that the custom should be in accordance with primitive use, and based upon the ecumenical authority of the undivided Church, which the English Church in her formularies has pledged herself to maintain. We must also examine the statements of those who hold that since the time of the Reformation the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament has been illegal in the English Church.

There is no question that in the early Church it was the custom to reserve the Blessed Sacrament for the purpose of communion *extra Missam*. There is a large amount of evidence on this point. As early as the time of Justin Martyr (*circa* A.D. 152) we have the direct statement that the deacons carried the sacrament to those who were not present in the church.[1] Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyprian all speak of the practice as existing in their time. There is also the well-known account contained in Eusebius, which is described as follows :

> An instance of reservation about the year 250 implies continuous reservation of the Sacrament. The story occurs in a letter written by the famous Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria. It relates that a certain Sarapion, having lapsed from the faith, was seized with sickness, and thereupon his faith returned, and he sent a boy to the priest to ask that he might have the Holy Communion. The boy ran to the priest, but the priest was also sick and could not go ; but having the Holy Sacrament reserved, he took a portion, which he entrusted to the messenger. The Sacrament was brought to Sarapion, and administered just in time for him to receive it before he died.[2]

The Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), in its thirteenth canon, emphasizes the need of dying persons

[1] Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, lxviii. 65.
[2] L. Pullan, *History of the Book of Common Prayer*, p. 231.

receiving the Viaticum, and distinctly implies that there should be reservation. It was practised in the African Church in the fourth century, and there is evidence of the custom in Constantinople in A.D. 403. With regard to the English Church, we know, on the authority of the Venerable Bede, that the celebrated Celtic poet Cædmon was communicated just before his death with the reserved Sacrament by the monks of Whitby. The practice seems to have been continuous from that time until the Reformation, and there are many references to it in English Canon Law.

Those who contend that under present conditions reservation is illegal in the English Church quote the Twenty-eighth Article of Religion and the rubric at the end of the Communion Service in support of their views. They also draw attention to the fact that while in the first Prayer Book of Edward VI provision is made for reservation under certain conditions, in subsequent revisions there is no mention made of reservation, and they infer that consequently the practice was intended to be discontinued.

The statement referred to in Article 28 is as follows: 'The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.' As Dr. Gibson points out in his book on the Thirty-nine Articles, 'The statement made in the Article is worded with the utmost care and with studied moderation. It cannot be said that any one of the practices is condemned or prohibited by it. It only amounts to this, that none of them can claim to be a part of the original Divine institution.'

We may also notice that the Article does not even say that reservation is wrong, much less condemn it, as is the case with certain other

mediaeval practices. As Dr. Leighton Pullan points out,[1] the reason for the insertion of this clause into Article 28 is to be found in the fact of the extreme rarity of communions at the end of the Middle Ages, the result being that the Sacrament was reserved almost entirely for the purpose of worship. This was not the primary purpose for which our Lord instituted the sacrament, and the Article draws attention to this. Dr. Pullan also notices the objection 'that reservation is at least indirectly prohibited, because the Article implies that reservation is using for one purpose a sacrament ordained for another purpose,' and replies, 'But reservation for *Communion* is not using for one purpose what Christ ordained for another, and therefore it does not come under any such prohibition.'

The second objection, that reservation is prohibited by the rubric at the end of the Communion Service, also breaks down under historical examination. The rubric in question reads as follows: 'And if any of the Bread and Wine remain unconsecrated, the Curate shall have it to his own use; but if any remain of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the Church, but the Priest and such other of the Communicants as he shall then call unto him, shall, immediately after the Blessing, reverently eat and drink the same.' It was inserted into the Prayer Book in 1661 on the advice of Bishops Cosin and Wren. Up to that time there had been no rubrical directions concerning what should be done with what remained of the consecrated elements. From the writings of Cosin we find the reason why this rubric was introduced. It was in order to correct a very grave and scandalous abuse which had arisen.

[1] Pullan, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 235.

Certain of the Puritan clergy had taken advantage of the 1552 rubric, 'And if any of the Bread and Wine remain the Curate shall have it to his own use,' to include both the consecrated and unconsecrated elements, and had appropriated both for use at their private tables. For this reason, and this reason alone, was the rubric inserted, and it has no reference whatever to the practice of reservation.

It is quite true that in the Prayer Book of 1552 no mention is made of reservation, while it is provided for in the 1549 Prayer Book, but its omission does not amount to prohibition. That this is so is proved by the fact that the Latin Prayer Book of Elizabeth (1560) contains the rubric ordering the sick to be communicated with the reserved Sacrament as in the Prayer Book of 1549.[1] This Latin Prayer Book was used, together with the English Prayer Book of 1552. The old Sarum Missal contained no rubric directing reservation; it was an understood thing that the priest would reserve as occasion required, and there is no sound evidence to show that under existing circumstances we should not adopt the same course.

On the positive side we may notice that it is a common opinion amongst canonists that Canon Law binds unless it has been definitely abrogated. In English Canon Law there are many regulations regarding reservation, the latest and most important being that contained in the Constitutions of Archbishop Peckham (A.D. 1278). We quote the following: '7. We charge that for the future the most worthy Sacrament of the Eucharist be so kept that a tabernacle be made in every Church

[1] cp. F. Procter and W. H. Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer* (1908 ed.), p 120.

with a decent enclosure. . . . We charge that the venerable Sacrament be renewed each Lord's Day. . . . We decree also that this Sacrament be carried with due reverence to the sick, the Priest having on his Surplice and Stole.' This law has never been repealed, and consequently may be considered as binding at the present day.

To sum up the result of our examination of the evidence regarding reservation. The practice is truly Catholic and primitive, it is nowhere forbidden in any of the formularies of our Church; on the contrary, it is enjoined by English Canon Law which holds good at the present time. On these grounds, those of us who reserve the Blessed Sacrament maintain that in doing so we are not only acting in accordance with the custom of the whole Church, but, at the lowest estimate, are violating no ecclesiastical law of this realm.

COMMUNION AND RESERVATION UNDER ONE KIND ONLY

History shows clearly that it is the custom of the Universal Church to give Communion under both kinds to the people. S. Cyril of Jerusalem (*circa* A.D. 387) gives the following instruction on how to communicate :

Make thy left hand a throne for thy right, as for that which is to receive a king. And hollowing thy palm receive the Body of Christ, saying over it the Amen. Hallow then with care thine eyes by the touch of the holy Body, and partake of it, giving heed lest thou lose any part of it; for whatever thou shouldest lose would evidently be a loss to thee as from one of thine own members. For tell me, if any one gave thee grains of gold, wouldest thou not hold them with all care, taking heed lest thou shouldest lose any of them and suffer loss? Wilt thou not much more carefully be on thy guard lest a crumb fall from thee of what is more precious than gold and precious stones? Then, after thou hast made thy com-

munion of the Body of Christ, draw near also to the cup of His Blood, not stretching out thy hands, but bending and in an attitude of reverence and worship saying the Amen, hallow thyself by partaking also of the Blood of Christ.[1]

It was not until long after the schism between East and West that it became the universal custom in the Western Church to receive communion in one kind only. The first general authoritative pronouncement on the matter by the Roman Church was in A.D. 1418, when the Council of Constance decreed that in future Holy Communion must be received under the species of bread alone, the consecrator only receiving under both species. It allows that the primitive custom of the Church was to receive under both species, but maintains that in order to avoid danger and scandal the custom may reasonably be changed. The Eastern Church has always given communion under both kinds, and in England the chalice was restored to the laity at the time of the Reformation.

We find, however, that communion in one kind, under exceptional circumstances, has always been considered perfectly sufficient and valid. When in primitive times infants were given communion after baptism (a custom still preserved in the Orthodox Church), it appears that they generally received under the species of wine alone, the priest using his finger to convey to them the Precious Blood. The practice of taking the Sacrament home for the purpose of communion, although abolished at an early date, was at one time widely observed. It seems clear that the species of bread alone was used for this home communion. Thus S. Basil uses the word μερίδα (μερίς, a particle) in connection with this custom, a word obviously

[1] Catechetical Lectures, xxiii, 21. 22. Quoted from Darwell Stone, *A History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*, I, p. 106.

inappropriate if both species were taken. All who hold the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence believe that under one species the whole Christ is indeed received ; in fact, it would be difficult to hold any other view. We content ourselves with quoting S. Cyril of Alexandria on this belief. He writes : ' For, as S. Paul says, " a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," so the very smallest portion of the Eucharist transfuses our whole body into itself, and fills us with its own energy, and thus Christ comes to exist in us and we in Him.' [1]

With regard to the communion of the sick, it appears that while the Sacrament was usually reserved under one kind—that of bread—it was sometimes reserved under both kinds. S. Augustine [2] states that it was reserved under the species of wine at Milan in golden barrels ; this was probably for the communion of infants. In any case, in the Western Church it became the custom to reserve under the species of bread alone, and in the Eastern Church the Sacrament is not reserved under the *liquid* species.[3]

A consideration of these facts seems to show that it is unreasonable to demand that the liquid species should be reserved. When the sick person is not seriously ill, and there is no danger of irreverence in administration, on timely notice being given to the priest he could reserve in both kinds at the morning Mass, and give communion to the person desiring it. The Sacrament would be permanently reserved under the species of bread, and used as

[1] R. I. Wilberforce, *Doctrine of the Eucharist*, 2nd ed., p. 70, n.

[2] *Epistle to Innocent.* 3.

[3] The present method used in the Orthodox Church is the intinction of the species of bread with the consecrated wine ; this is then dried by baking and reserved for the communion of the sick.

occasion required. It is important to remember that Convocation in the strongest document ever produced by that body on the necessity of communion in both kinds qualifies its statements as follows: 'Under both kinds, that is to say of bread and wine, *except necessity otherwise require.*'

METHOD OF RESERVATION

The Sacrament was reserved in a variety of ways in the Middle Ages. In this country and also in France it was sometimes placed in a silver or gold pyx suspended above the altar; occasionally these pyxes were in the form of a dove. At Rome, and also in Scotland, the common custom was to reserve in a cupboard, or aumbry, generally handsomely decorated, placed in the chancel wall. This method is generally approved to-day by those of our bishops who are willing to recognize reservation in spite of the rejection of the revised Prayer Books. Some churches in Germany still possess very beautiful 'sacrament houses'; these consist of stone work of delicate design and carving, and are situated in the chancel of the church. The most convenient method of reservation is that now generally practised in the West, in which a tabernacle placed over the centre of the altar is used for containing the Blessed Sacrament.

Reverence demands that the Blessed Sacrament should be housed as handsomely as possible; there should be nothing mean or makeshift about the method of reservation. It should be kept in the church, either upon the high altar or upon some other altar conveniently situated, or in a properly constructed aumbry in the chancel wall. When a tabernacle is used it should be firmly and immovably fixed upon the altar, so that there can be no possibility of its being disturbed. It is best that

the body of the tabernacle or aumbry should consist of an iron safe, fire and damp proof. The inside of the safe should be lined with cedar-wood as a further protection against damp, and the wood should be covered with white silk. If circumstances will allow, the outside of the safe should be handsomely decorated with silver or brass work; in any case, it should be made as beautiful as possible.

The door may be suitably carved or decorated. The subject should have some reference to the Blessed Sacrament, or to our Lord's Passion or Resurrection. Care should be taken that the door is large enough to allow the ciborium to be taken out or put in with ease. It should also be provided with a strong lock; one key should always be kept in the church safe, the parish priest taking charge of the duplicate key. Nothing should be placed in front of the door, such as a vase of flowers or a sanctuary lamp.

The whole structure should be covered by a veil of rich silk, or cloth of gold; when silk is used the colour should be that of the day. In poor churches it is a good plan to have two veils only, one of cloth of gold, the other of violet silk, as these will serve for all occasions. The Roman Church prescribes that the tabernacle shall always have an outside veil, but the custom is not strictly observed.

The tabernacle or aumbry is intended for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament only; consequently it should not be used as a receptacle for the holy oils or anything else, however sacred. The Sacrament should be reserved in a ciborium of silver or gold. This should be covered with a veil of cloth of gold or richly embroidered silk. A corporal, made to fit, should be placed upon the

floor of the receptacle and replaced by a clean one as occasion requires.

A sanctuary lamp should be kept burning night and day before the altar upon which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. The oil used should be pure oil of olives, but in very poor churches a cheaper oil may be employed, provided it is vegetable in origin. The colour of the lamp should be white, as this is the colour appropriate to the Blessed Sacrament. Also by this means all confusion is avoided when other altars in the church have lamps burning before them, the colour of which would generally be red.

The Sacrament should be renewed every eight days ; this is ordered by the Constitutions of Archbishop Peckham, and, if these regulations are strictly observed, the renewal will take place on Sunday : ' We charge that the venerable Sacrament be renewed each Lord's Day.' The priest should take care always to use freshly prepared altar breads, not only for the purpose of reservation, but for consecration at the Eucharist ; in no case should wafers used for the Sacred Mysteries be more than two months old. Ordinary leavened bread, owing to the presence of yeast, is liable to become quickly objectionable, particularly if stored in a damp place, as a fungoid growth or mould soon develops under such circumstances. If kept in a dry place it rapidly loses moisture, and, becomes stale and hard. Unleavened altar breads are far less liable to mould, but they lose moisture rapidly if stored in a very dry place. This makes them very brittle and friable, and they are highly dangerous to use. Particles easily become detached on the paten, corporal, or (in the case of the reserved Sacrament) in the ciborium, and often when the Host is placed in the hand or mouth of

the communicant a small particle is broken off by the priest's finger from the edge of the Host. On the other hand, if the breads are stored in a damp place they absorb moisture and become limp, which is nearly as bad as their being dry and brittle.

One would like to suggest the following simple precautions to be observed with regard to the breads used for communion and reservation : (i) A written guarantee should be obtained, if possible, from the vendor that the breads supplied are not more than seven days old on delivery. (ii) Breads should not be used for consecration that are more than two months old. (iii) The breads should be stored in tins, in an equable temperature, neither too dry nor too damp. (iv) Breads should be round and of medium thickness, and of a size between that of a halfpenny and a penny. It is dangerous to use very small breads ; they are thin and break very easily, and because of their lightness are liable to be displaced from the hand of the communicant by his breath. Large breads are difficult to consume, and should also be avoided.

Every church in which the Sacrament is reserved should, if possible, possess more than one ciborium ; this will avoid any inconvenience in renewing the Sacrament. The new Hosts can then be consecrated in the second ciborium and the old ones distributed to the faithful at the time of communion. The first ciborium will be cleansed by the priest at the time of taking the ablutions. The author has found the following a convenient method : Before the priest consumes what remains of the Precious Blood after the communion of the people, he first consumes any Hosts that may remain in the ciborium. He then carefully collects

with the forefinger of his right hand any small fragments which remain in the ciborium, and, bringing them to the edge of the vessel, allows them to drop into the chalice, and a little wine is then poured into the empty vessel ; he should also cleanse his finger from any fragments which may adhere by rubbing his finger and thumb over the chalice. When the contents of the chalice have been received he takes the first ablution ; the server now pours the wine and water of the second ablution over his fingers. Having dried his fingers on the purificator, he now transfers the wine of the ciborium to the chalice and consumes both this and the second ablution. The chalice and ciborium are now dried with the purificator in the usual way.[1]

When the church possesses only one ciborium, and the newly consecrated Particles have to be put into it directly after it has been cleansed, it is advisable that no wine should be used in the purification. Experience shows that, if a little extra care be taken, the ciborium can be thoroughly cleansed with the finger, and the new Hosts can then be transferred from the paten to the ciborium. In this case, at least every month or six weeks the ciborium should be thoroughly cleansed, along with the other sacred vessels, by the sacristan, and two or three Hosts should be reserved in the pyx during the day this is done.

PREPARATION OF THE SICK ROOM

We have now to describe the preparations which should be made in the sick room previous to the coming of the priest with the Blessed Sacrament. Under all ordinary circumstances it will be possible

[1] O'Kane gives four methods of purifying the ciborium ; the method described in the text, although based upon O'Kane, differs in some details cp. *Rubrics*, chap. xi, n. 622.

for these preliminaries to be arranged as reverence demands, but for those occasions on which the Sacrament has to be administered at very short notice the priest should be provided with a sick call case, which can be purchased at a moderate cost from any well-known church provider.

The sick room should be made as clean and tidy as possible. A table should be prepared at a convenient distance from the bed, covered with a clean white cloth ; upon this there should be placed a crucifix and two candles, which will be lighted just before the priest's arrival. In addition, there should be a small cruet containing water for the ablutions. The ablution with wine may be omitted. A purificator may also be provided if the priest does not bring one with him. A clean communion cloth should be in readiness ; this is placed under the chin of the person when receiving communion. It is a safeguard against irreverence if by any accident, such as coughing, the Blessed Sacrament be ejected from the mouth. When the communicant is a priest a surplice and white stole should also be provided, which he will wear when receiving the Blessed Sacrament. If, however, he is very ill it is best to dispense with the surplice and simply hang the stole round the neck.

When all preparations are complete and the time has come for the arrival of the priest, the attendant should light the candles on the table, and, taking a small bell in one hand and a lighted candle in the other, go to the door of the house and await the priest's arrival. On the priest entering the house the attendant should genuflect towards the Blessed Sacrament, and precede the priest to the sick room, ringing the bell at frequent intervals as a warning to those in the house that the Blessed Sacrament has arrived.

THE FAST BEFORE COMMUNION

A sick person who is not in danger of death is bound to keep the usual fast before communion ; the only case in which communion can be given after food is when the Viaticum is received. Even in this case, if the person is able to receive fasting he should do so, but if abstinence from food or medicine causes the slightest inconvenience the Sacrament should be given non-fasting.

In the Roman Church there has been a considerable relaxation during recent years with regard to the fast before communion in the case of sick persons. On December 6, 1906, a Decree was published in which it was provided that ' all sick persons who have been confined to their beds for one month, and of whose early recovery there is no probable hope, should be allowed, guided by the advice of their confessor, to receive the Holy Eucharist once or twice a week when they live in pious houses where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, or if they enjoy the privilege of having Mass celebrated in a private oratory, and once or twice a month in other cases ; and that they may do so, even when they have previously taken some sort of liquid food, provided the rules prescribed by the Roman Ritual and the Sacred Congregation of Rites are observed.' Ferreres comments on this as follows :

> Thus the necessary conditions required to benefit by the privilege granted in the above decree are : First, that the illness shall have lasted already for a month and there is no prospect of the early recovery of the invalid. For the words *a mense decumberent* would seem to imply that those persons only are spoken of who have been confined to their beds for a month. We think it, however, probable that these words are not to be too literally understood, but may be extended so far as to include those who are suffering from an illness which has

kept them indoors, and who are incapable of keeping the usual fast before communion. It is also probable that any sick person who has been in bed for a month is entitled to the privilege in question, although the illness, serious in its development, was not so from the beginning. Secondly, it is the confessor who has to determine if the sick person is in the condition for which the Decree provides. The opinion of the doctor is not required, but the confessor may ask his advice and be guided by it. Only liquid food is permitted, so that any kind of solid nourishment, as lozenges, eggs, and the like, is not allowed, although these substances may be given to the sick person dissolved in wine or water.[1]

These rulings do not, of course, bind us in the least degree (many of us may regret their existence, as a sign of laxity in the Roman communion), but they are quoted for the information of those who may not previously have been aware of their significance.[2]

The Viaticum should not be administered when there is grave danger of irreverence to the Sacra-

[1] J. B. Ferreres, *The Decree on Daily Communion*, p. 131.

[2] As an illustration of how readily, once the initial privilege is granted, more relaxations of the rule can be inferred, we continue our quotation from Ferreres: 'N.B.—The decree makes reference to persons who are bedridden, or at least unable to go out of doors. Now we may propose the following case. If a patient who suffers from a chronic disease cannot abstain from food before communion but can go or be taken to church, is he allowed to receive the Holy Eucharist there after having taken beforehand some liquid food? It is difficult to give a solution to this case, especially if we consider that there is danger of scandal being given to the faithful when they see a person who has broken the fast prescribed by the Church approaching the Holy Table. We think, however, that a patient under these circumstances is entitled to share twice a week the privilege of the decree. We base our solution on the consideration that the Pope's wishes are that such persons should not be deprived for long of the benefit of Holy Communion, and if they can go to church they may be considered to be comprehended in the case of those who have an oratory at home.'

ment. The priest would therefore refrain from giving it to a person who was insane, or in delirium. The Roman Church allows the Viaticum to be administered even in delirium to those who have led a good Christian life:

> If loss of reason be caused by disease, as in fever, or if the person be subject to passing fits of insanity, the priest should await the return of reason, and be prepared to avail himself of the first favourable moment to administer the Sacrament. It may happen, however, that the use of reason is not recovered, or at least is not recovered until the patient is dying and unable to receive communion. If this be apprehended, the Viaticum may be administered even during the delirium to those who have led a good Christian life, provided there be no danger of irreverence. This is the common teaching of theologians, and is clearly enough conveyed in the passage cited [1] from the Catechism of the Council of Trent.[2]

Danger of irreverence may also arise from the following causes: Continuous coughing, difficulty or inability to swallow, frequent vomiting, and difficulty in breathing. O'Kane suggests that in all these cases a little food or drink should be given first, in order to try whether the person can receive without danger of rejecting the Sacred Host. If coughing is not so continuous as to prevent swallowing he holds that communion may safely be given. If, through the parched state of the mouth, the sick person might have difficulty in swallowing the Host, 'a little wine or water may be given immediately before or after, or, if necessary, a very small Particle may be put into a little wine or water, and administered in this way.' In the case of vomit the Sacrament may be given if it is reasonable to suppose that there will be no recurrence of sickness for about half an hour after receiving.

[1] The reference is *Catech. Roman.*, Pars ii, cap. vi, n. 64.
[2] O'Kane, *Rubrics*, chap. xiv, n. 781.

The same author recommends :

Should the Sacred Host be rejected by vomit, if it still appears entire or is easily discernible, it should be reverently taken up and carried in a clean vessel to the church, to be kept there till it corrupts, when it is to be thrown into the sacrarium. If it cannot be distinguished from the rest of what is thrown off, all should be carefully taken up and burned, and the ashes thrown into the sacrarium.[1]

Children, who have not yet received the Blessed Sacrament but who understand the benefits to be obtained from communion, should be given the Viaticum when they are in danger of death.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE VIATICUM

In the days before the Reformation the Blessed Sacrament was usually carried to the sick person with great solemnity. The Constitutions of Archbishop Peckham direct that it is to be carried to the sick with due reverence ; the priest is to wear at least a surplice and stole, and is to be preceded by attendants carrying lights, and a bell is to be rung to warn the faithful to pay proper reverence to the Blessed Sacrament. This direction cannot at present, in towns at least, be observed ; it would defeat its own object. The author once took part in a procession of this nature in a country village, and was much impressed by the behaviour of the people. The men removed their hats, and the women made a reverence as the Blessed Sacrament passed. Perhaps it will be the vocation of the country clergy to bring about the restoration of this ancient custom. In the directions given here it is supposed that the Sacrament will be conveyed privately to the sick person.

The priest first vests in the sacristy ; he should wear a surplice and stole, and over his vestments

[1] *Rubrics*, chap xiv, n. 782.

he would place a cloak or some other suitable garment. The colour of the stole in sick communions is always white ; if he has to administer Penance or Unction it is convenient to have a stole violet on one side and white on the other. The Blessed Sacrament is carried in a pyx of convenient size ; it should be provided with a case which can be securely fastened, and the case should be suspended round the neck by means of a strong cord ; there will then be no danger of the pyx being dropped during the journey from the church to the sick room. The priest should also carry a corporal and purificator in a separate case. It is best to reserve a Host in the pyx permanently, so that, when sick communion has to be given, all the priest has to do is to take the pyx out of the tabernacle and place it in the case previously suspended round his neck. If, however, the Host has to be transferred from the ciborium to the pyx the following method should be used : Before the priest vests he should place upon the altar a burse, containing a corporal, a small vessel of water, and a purificator ; two candles should also be lighted. After vesting he goes to the altar and spreads the corporal. The tabernacle is now opened and the ciborium taken out and placed upon the corporal. When the Blessed Sacrament has been transferred to the pyx the ciborium is replaced in the tabernacle, and the latter is locked. The priest now cleanses his fingers in the vessel of water, dries them on the purificator, places the pyx in its case, and folds the corporal. If possible he should have a server in attendance, who will precede him to the door of the church with a candle and bell.

During the journey from the church to the house the priest should always be mindful of the sacred

Presence with him ; he should occupy his mind by reciting the Penitential Psalms, and keep his eyes as far as possible fixed upon the ground ; he should not salute any one or acknowledge the salutation of others. When he enters the sick room he should say the words provided in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick, ' Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it.'

He now goes to the table provided, and, after spreading the corporal, takes the pyx from its case and places it upon the corporal. While he is doing this the attendant should arrange the communion cloth under the chin of the sick person, and then kneel down.[1] The general confession is now said by the sick person, or by the attendant if the sick person is too ill to say it himself. The priest next gives the absolution, taking care not to turn his back upon the Blessed Sacrament, and, if the condition of the patient allows, the Comfortable Words and prayer of Humble Access will follow. The Host is now taken between the thumb and first finger of the right hand, and, carefully holding it over the pyx, the priest turns to the sick person and says, ' Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him that taketh away the sins of the world.' According to ancient custom the words, ' Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof ; but speak the word only and my soul shall be healed,' are said three times. The priest then gives the communion, using the ordinary words of administration. Formerly a distinction was made between administering communion to the sick and giving the Viaticum by using different words. The Viaticum was given under the following formula,

[1] We assume here that the sick person has already been visited by the priest and made his confession. If confession is to be made the attendant will, of course, leave the room.

'Receive, brother (or sister), the Viaticum of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and may He preserve thee from the malicious enemy and bring thee to everlasting life. Amen.'

The ablutions should follow at once, and if they are to be taken by the sick person, as little water as possible should be used. It is generally agreed that if the person is so ill that the ablutions cannot be received by him they may be taken back to the church and poured into the piscina, or thrown on to the fire in the sick room. Our directions have reference to communion with the Host only, but if both kinds have been administered the vessel containing the Precious Blood will also, of course, have to be cleansed. The priest, standing at the table, now recites the Lord's Prayer, a post-communion collect, and gives the blessing. This concludes the priest's ministrations unless Extreme Unction is to be administered, which is dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME UNCTION

Scope of the chapter—The 1549 Prayer Book—The institution and nature of the sacrament—The matter of the sacrament—Is the blessing of the oil by a priest valid?—How the oil should be kept—The form of the sacrament—One anointing in cases of necessity—The effect of the sacrament—The minister of the sacrament—Eastern and Western divergencies of practice—The subject of the sacrament—Parts of the body to be anointed—The manner of applying the unctions—Preparation of the sick room—The order of the service.

WE propose in this our last chapter to deal with the subject of the anointing of the sick with oil, administered as a sacrament. It would be out of place to enter into any discussion as to whether any other anointing of the sick, such as for the exclusive object of restoring the person to health even while under medical treatment, is permissible or not.[1] The dogmatic teaching given on the sacrament is based on that of S. Thomas Aquinas, and treats the anointing of the sick as the sacrament of Extreme Unction, and that only.

In the First Prayer Book of Edward VI, 1549, the Unction of the sick was retained, the directions given for its administration being as follows:

If the sick person desire to be anointed, then shall the priest

[1] The subject is discussed at length in my *Present Day Problems* under the title, 'The Last Anointing.'

anoint him upon the forehead or breast only, making the sign of the Cross, saying thus :

As with this visible oil thy body outwardly is anointed : so our heavenly Father, Almighty God, grant of His infinite goodness that thy soul inwardly may be anointed with the Holy Ghost, Who is the Spirit of all strength, comfort, relief, and gladness : and vouchsafe for His great mercy (if it be His blessed will) to restore unto thee thy bodily health, and strength, to serve Him ; and send thee release of all thy pains, troubles, and diseases, both in body and mind. And howsoever His goodness (by His divine and unsearchable providence) shall dispose of thee : we, His unworthy ministers and servants, humbly beseech the Eternal Majesty to do with thee according to the multitude of His innumerable mercies, and to pardon thee all thy sins, and offences, committed by all thy bodily senses, passions, and carnal affections : Who also vouchsafe mercifully to grant unto thee ghostly strength by His Holy Spirit to withstand and overcome all temptations and assaults of thine adversary, that in no wise he prevail against thee, but that thou mayest have perfect victory and triumph against the devil, sin, and death, through Christ our Lord : Who by His death hath overcome the prince of death, and with the Father and the Holy Ghost evermore liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.

Psalm xiii then follows.

In the Prayer Book of 1552 the rite was altogether omitted, and it was not restored at any subsequent revision of the Prayer Book. Happily, there is an increasing number of bishops who are willing to consecrate oil for the anointing of the sick, and signs are not wanting that a form of service may be authorized in the near future.

Following S. Thomas Aquinas, we will consider the subject under the following heads : The institution and nature of the sacrament ; its effects ; the minister and subject of the sacrament ; and, finally, the manner in which it is to be administered.

THE INSTITUTION AND NATURE OF THE SACRAMENT [1]

Extreme Unction is to be considered as a true sacrament instituted by our Blessed Lord, and promulgated by His apostle Saint James in the canonical Scriptures. The priests of the Church are directed to administer the sacrament to the Faithful in the following words: 'Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him. Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for the other, that ye may be healed.' [2] Confession of sin is to be made, prayers are to be said, and the sick person anointed with oil. It may be noticed here that the words used by S. James, ἀσθενεῖ τις, and κάμνοντα, infer that the person is suffering from a serious illness.

The sacrament is called *Extreme* Unction, not, as some erroneously suppose, because it is given only when a person is *in extremis*, but because it is the extreme or last anointing given to the Christian. The other anointings were in baptism, confirmation, ordination, and certain special consecrations. As we shall show later, the administration of this sacrament ought not to be delayed until the subject is at the point of death.

The matter [3] of this sacrament is distinguished as 'remote' and 'proximate.' The *materia remota* is oil of olives which has been blessed by a bishop; the *materia proxima* is the anointing of certain parts of the body with the oil, and is administered by a priest. Several interesting points arise out of the

[1] cp. *Summa*, Suppl. Q. xxix, art. 1–3.
[2] S. James v. 14–16. [3] cp. *Summa*, Suppl. Q. xxix, art. 4–6.

matter of the sacrament. It is to be olive oil that has been blessed by the bishop. The common teaching of Western theologians is that this blessing is essential to the validity of the sacrament, but it is by no means agreed that the oil should have been blessed with the expressed intention of being used in this sacrament. Suarez [1] holds that oil blessed in any way by the bishop is sufficient, for all that is required is that it should be '*oleum ab episcopo benedictum*.' The contrary opinion is, however, also held. In the Roman Church the oil is blessed on Holy Thursday and distributed to the clergy; they are thus supposed to renew their stock of oil each year, what remains from the previous year's stock being burned.[2] The Orthodox Church allows that the sacrament may be validly administered with oil that has been blessed by a cleric in priest's orders only, and O'Kane says 'there can be no doubt that this benediction suffices.' By a decree of the Congregation of the Inquisition priests of the Roman obedience are forbidden to use oil blessed by themselves for Extreme Unction.[3]

These facts give rise to a question of considerable interest to ourselves. If a priest, for some reason or another, is unable to obtain the *oleum infirmorum* from the bishop, is he justified in blessing it himself? We note that it is a disputed point whether the benediction by the bishop is essential to the validity of the sacrament, or only of ecclesiastical precept. O'Kane says, 'It is certain, therefore, notwithstanding the contrary opinion of some theologians, that a simple priest when expressly

[1] Disp. xi, sect. 1, n. 9.

[2] Father Davis states: 'The old oil is usually burned in the sanctuary lamp,' *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, vol. iv, p. 3.

[3] O'Kane, *Rubrics*, chap. xv, n. 854. He gives the reference, 24 Sept., 1842, Denzinger, *Enchiridion* cxxv.

or tacitly commissioned by the Pope, can validly bless the oil for this sacrament.' We have noted that the Orthodox Church allows the blessing of the oil by a simple priest ; he will have, one supposes, the permission of his bishop, either expressly or tacitly, to give the benediction. Dr. Mortimer[1] comes to this conclusion : ' Indeed the present practice in the East seems to imply that the blessing of the oil may be considered *as part of the ordinary jurisdiction* committed to every parish priest, like the hearing of confessions in the Anglican Communion. . . . From which we may perhaps infer that amongst ourselves, when oil blessed by a bishop cannot be obtained, necessity may justify a priest in blessing the oil.' The present author accepts this conclusion, and, although he has fortunately never been under the necessity of blessing the *oleum infirmorum*, he would consider that the needs of his flock would justify his so doing, if the bishop would not or could not bless it. In any case the question is one upon which we should value the research and advice of our own Catholic-minded theologians.

The blessed oil should be kept in a metal or silver vessel, preferably provided with a screw top. Holy Oil stocks are usually supplied by Roman Catholic church providers in a case containing three vessels marked respectively with the letters B, C and I, in order to distinguish the three oils used in anointing, namely at Baptism (B), Confirmation (C), and Extreme Unction (I). The vessel for the *oleum infirmorum* (I) can generally be obtained separately, but without the case, for a few shillings. Besides the vessel containing the stock of oil the priest should also provide himself with a smaller vessel for use when the sacrament is administered ;

[1] *Catholic Faith and Practice*, pt. ii, chap. v.

this is filled with cotton wool, and a small quantity of the oil poured upon it as necessity requires. This vessel should be provided with a suitable case made of silk, which will be violet in colour. The oil should be kept in the church, unless there are grave reasons against this. O'Kane describes a method of keeping the oil which seems worthy of serious consideration. He says: 'Baruffaldi recommends that it be kept in a press or safe placed in the wall of the church on the gospel side of the high altar, or altar where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, so that a lamp may be always burning before it; and that the door of the press have on it, in legible characters, "SANCTUM OLEUM INFIRMORUM." He also points out that in no case should the oil be placed in the tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.'[1] This plan recommends itself both on the grounds of convenience and reverence, and also because a safe, such as that described, could be erected at a small cost.

There is sometimes a danger of the stock of oil becoming exhausted before a new supply can be obtained. O'Kane provides for this by saying: 'If during the year the supply becomes nearly exhausted, and a further supply cannot easily be procured, unblessed oil may be added, but in less quantity; and this, too, as often as may be necessary, although what is thus added, taking all the additions together, may exceed in quantity what was first blessed.'[2]

A consideration of the *materia proxima* is reserved until we deal with the subject of the sacrament.

S. Thomas Aquinas devotes three articles to the consideration of the form of this sacrament.[3] He

[1] *Rubrics*, chap. xv, n. 855. [2] ibid., chap xv, n. 857
[3] *Summa*, Suppl. Q. xxix, art. 7–9.

first maintains that Unction, in common with the rest of the sacraments, has a definite form. This form, in accordance with the words of S. James, 'and let them pray over him,' is intercessory: 'Through this holy unction, and His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by sight, etc.' Finally, in answer to the question: 'Whether the foregoing prayer is a suitable form for this sacrament,' he replies as follows: 'The prayer given above is a suitable form for this sacrament, for it includes the sacrament by the words: "By this holy unction," and that which operates in the sacrament, viz. "the mercy of God," and the effect, viz. "remission of sins."' [1]

Marc has the following well-arranged notes on the form of the Sacrament:

1. The words 'Through this unction may the Lord pardon thee whatever thou hast done amiss' (*deliquisti*) belong to the essence of the sacrament. There are some indeed who say that the words 'thou hast done amiss' are not of its essence. But that is a gratuitous assertion, seeing that they express the remission of sins, which is the principal effect of this sacrament.

2. The word 'holy,' as is universally admitted, does not belong to the essence of the sacrament, nor do the words 'of His most tender mercy,' for intercession with God for pardon is already a pleading with His mercy, as the authorities more commonly and probably have it. But the omission of these last words would be a grave sin against the custom of the Church, in grave matter; not even the word 'holy' may be omitted without blame.

3. The form must not be concluded before the other part of the same sense has been anointed. If a priest falls ill during the anointing, the anointings already made must not be repeated unless a quarter of an hour has already elapsed, in which case they may be made again conditionally.

4. On the conclusion of the form in each anointing, the sick man with those present may reply 'Amen.' And it will be a

[1] *Summa*, Suppl. Q. xxix, art. 9.

commendable practice, during the anointing of his five bodily senses, for him to make express acts of sorrow for the faults he has committed through them.[1]

This consideration of the form of the sacrament is not only of theoretical, but also of practical interest. Cases may arise in practice where the sick person is in such danger that he may die at any moment, and the matter and form of the sacrament have to be applied at once if it is to be administered at all. It is commonly agreed by Western theologians that in such cases a single unction may be applied, and S. Alphonsus[2] recommends the following form: 'Through this holy unction and His most tender mercy may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by the senses, by seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching.' O'Kane describes how this single unction should be performed. He says: 'The *Modo Pratico* directs that it be applied to the forehead, *nella fronte*.' Baruffaldi appears to recommend the same, and so does Falise. It would be well, we think, to follow this in practice. But after applying the thumb to the forehead we should instantly, and without making the sign of the Cross, pass it over one eye, over the nose and lips, and then apply it to one ear. We should thus have the unction of all the organs, the forehead holding the place of the hand. We are convinced that this could be done as quickly as the words of the form above given could be pronounced. In most cases, even the hand, after the ear, could be anointed within the time.[3]

The author is aware that some priests administer Unction according to the form given in the 1549 Prayer Book, which, of course, provides for one

[1] Marc, *Instit. Moral.* § 1877.

[2] *Theol. Moral.*, Lib. v. n. 710 [3] *Rubrics*, chap. xv, n. 872.

anointing at all times, and that such will consider what has been written above to be superfluous. We may, however, point out that the 1549 Prayer Book has no more authority than the pre-reformation form which provides for the full number of anointings. We are frankly attempting to revive a sacrament which has fallen into disuse, and it seems better, at least to the present author, to use a form which is more in accordance with Catholic custom than that given in the 1549 Prayer Book. The question of how many anointings are necessary will be considered later.

THE EFFECT OF THE SACRAMENT [1]

In common with all the other sacraments, Extreme Unction confers sanctifying grace, and has also effects peculiar to itself. Its chief effect, according to S. Thomas, is to bring about the health of the soul.[2] 'The chief object of the institution of this sacrament,' he says, 'is to cure the sickness of sin. Therefore, just as baptism is a spiritual regeneration, and Penance a spiritual resurrection, so Extreme Unction is a spiritual healing or cure.' [3]

Strength is thus given to the soul in its last agony, and great confidence is aroused in the divine mercy. Unction also remits sins, both mortal and venial, where the sick person is not conscious of them or, having at least attrition for them, is unable to make his confession. It removes, too, hardness of heart, obscurity of mind, despair, anxieties, and such-like things which are the consequences of sin. Nevertheless, since

[1] cp. *Summa*, Suppl. Q. xxx.

[2] The words, 'And the prayer of faith shall save the sick,' thus refer both to the healing of the soul and of the body.

[3] *Summa*, Suppl. Q. xxx, art. 1.

Unction was not instituted, like Baptism and Penance, primarily for the remission of sin, there is an obligation incumbent on one about to receive it, if he knows he is in a state of sin, to put himself in a state of grace by confession and perfect contrition.

Another effect of this sacrament is to restore the bodily health of the recipient if God so wills. With regard to this effect S. Alphonsus definitely maintains that the restoration to health, although due to the supernatural virtue of the sacrament, is not brought about *'per modum miraculi.'* [1] This opinion is of importance in view of the fact that there are those amongst us who are disposed to anoint the sick with the idea of a miraculous cure. As already stated, we do not propose to enter into this controversy, but are contented to rest upon the authority of S. Thomas Aquinas, and for this purpose quote in full, in the next paragraph, his answer to the question, ' Whether bodily health is an effect of this sacrament.' We may, however, observe that to hold the opinion that the bodily healing does not take place *'per modum miraculi'* in no way supposes that the anointing should be delayed until death is imminent. In fact it has the opposite effect, for if the sick person is to partake abundantly of the graces of the sacrament it should be administered while the mental faculties are still unimpaired, and he can bring to its reception sentiments of faith and devotion.[2]

The teaching of S. Thomas is as follows :

Just as baptism causes a spiritual cleansing from spiritual stains by means of bodily washing, so this sacrament causes an inward healing by means of an outward sacramental healing : and even as the baptismal washing has the effect

[1] *Theol. Moral.*, Lib. v, n. 714.
[2] cp. *Catech. Roman.*, Pars ii, cap. vi, n 9.

of a bodily washing, since it effects even a bodily cleansing, so, too, Extreme Unction has the effect of a bodily remedy, namely the healing of the body. But there is a difference, forasmuch as the bodily washing causes a bodily cleansing by a natural property of the bodily element, and consequently always causes it, whereas Extreme Unction causes a bodily healing, not by a natural property of the matter, but by the divine power which works reasonably. And since reasonable working never produces a secondary effect, except in so far as it is required for the principal effect, it follows that a bodily healing does not always ensue from this sacrament, but only when it is requisite for spiritual healing : and then it produces it always, provided there be no obstacle on the part of the recipient.[1]

The minister[2] of the sacrament of Extreme Unction must be at least in priest's orders. This follows from the words of S. James, ' Is any sick amongst you ? let him call for the *elders* of the church.' Under no circumstances may a layman or one in deacon's orders administer this sacrament. The parish priest, or one of his assistants deputed by him, should administer the sacrament ; it is contrary to Church order to give the sacraments outside one's own parish. In cases of urgent necessity, however, Unction may be administered by any priest, who would afterwards notify the priest of the parish.

It was the usual custom of the early Church for several priests to take part in the anointing of the sick. This is also to be inferred from the words of S. James, the plural form ' elders ' being used. The custom continued in the West until as late as the thirteenth century, and the modern Roman Ritual recommends that more than one priest shall assist in the administration of the sacrament if at all possible.[3] There are, however, many instances

[1] *Summa*, Suppl. Q. xxx, art. 2. [2] ibid., Q. xxxi.
[3] *Rituale Romanum*, tit. v, cap. 2, n. 2

in early Church history of the administration of Unction by one priest, and no doubt was entertained concerning its validity. There seems to have been a great diversity of practice when several priests took part in the service; in some cases each priest present anointed the sick person, in others one priest would anoint one organ with the appropriate words, and another another; and sometimes one priest would anoint the sick person while another said the words.[1] According to modern Western usage the whole of the unctions are given by the same priest, no matter how many others may be present.

The Orthodox Church still insists upon several priests taking part in the service: the recognized number is seven, and in cases of necessity three, but one priest is allowed to administer the rite by himself in emergencies.[2] O'Kane has some interesting remarks on the custom of the Greek Church as follows:

> According to the Greek usage the ceremony is very long. The priests bless the oil with several prayers and canticles; they recite seven epistles, seven gospels, and seven long prayers. Each of them anoints the sick person, reciting, while he anoints, the prayer, Πάτερ Ἅγιε, ἰατρὲ τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ τῶν σωμάτων, etc. This prayer, according to the common opinion, constitutes the form of the sacrament. The book of the Gospels is placed on the sick man's head, and all the priests impose hands upon him, while the principal priest, called in the rubric ὁ προϊστάμενος, recites a prayer. We may observe that the oil is blessed each time, and the ceremony is performed in the church if the sick person can be brought to it; otherwise in his house.[3]

[1] cp. O'Kane, *Rubrics*, chap. xvi, n. 908; his authority is Martène.

[2] See R. L. Langford-James, *A Dictionary of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, p. 133.

[3] *Rubrics*, chap. xvi, n. 907.

THE SUBJECT OF THE SACRAMENT [1]

A person, in order to receive Extreme Unction validly, must: (i) have previously received the sacrament of baptism; (ii) have attained the use of reason; and (iii) be in proper danger of death from sickness.

Since baptism is the first of the Christian sacraments, Unction can only be administered to those who have previously been baptized. If, however, a person is baptized during a serious illness, he ought also to receive Extreme Unction; it is true that baptism remits all sin, but it does not bestow the special graces to be obtained from Extreme Unction—namely, the removal of the torpor and weakness due to sin, and the bestowal of special grace to resist the devil in the last agony, nor does baptism restore to bodily health.

Extreme Unction cannot validly be administered to infants who have not yet attained the use of reason, since they are incapable of yielding to temptation, and consequently cannot be restored to spiritual health, which, as we have seen, is the primary effect of this sacrament.[2] Children who have attained the use of reason, but have not yet received Holy Communion, may receive Unction if the priest judges them to be fit subjects for the sacrament. For the same reasons those persons who have been insane from infancy are not considered proper subjects for Unction. If the sick person is in delirium through disease the priest should wait for a lucid interval in which to give Extreme Unction; it may, however, according to the common opinion, be given in delirium provided the person is a practising Catholic, and has been taught to look forward to receiving

[1] *Summa*, Suppl. Q. xxxii. [2] ibid., art. 4.

it, and in this case Unction can be given when Penance is impossible. It should never, of course, be administered to the uninstructed who are in this condition.

With regard to the last condition, that the person must be in probable danger of death from sickness, it is not enough that he be in danger of death from violence or some other external cause. The Apostle says, 'Is any *sick* amongst you?' Consequently it cannot validly be administered to a soldier about to face the enemy, to criminals who are to be executed, nor to one setting out upon any dangerous undertaking. It is also agreed that it is a misuse of the sacrament to anoint women suffering the ordinary pains of childbirth, since this is not a disease; if, however, complications are present and the woman is in danger, the sacrament should be given. Persons sinking from extreme old age may and should be anointed, since this is in itself an infirmity, and they are in danger of death.

In practice the priest should not delay too long in administering Unction. It is most certainly a grave abuse to allow people to come almost to the point of death before giving the sacrament, and we ought to teach our people to send for a priest in good time, so that the sick may benefit from our ministrations. Medical opinion can almost always be obtained as to the condition of the patient; it is a good rule, when in doubt, to administer the sacrament rather than to delay. Extreme Unction may only be given once in the same illness, but it is agreed that if a patient in a long illness partially recovers and again becomes seriously ill the sacrament may be repeated.

Since the sacrament of Extreme Unction is medicinal, the anointings are not applied to the whole body, but only to those parts of the body

which are afflicted by, or contribute to, spiritual diseases. In the Western Church the custom has been to anoint the five organs of sense—the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the mouth and the hands, and the feet and the loins.[1] It is quite certain that both the anointing of the feet and of the loins may be omitted without in any way affecting the validity of the sacrament ; as a matter of fact, the loins should never be anointed in the case of females, and this anointing is not necessary in the case of males. We need not consider the various opinions held by theologians as to how many anointings are necessary ; the safe rule in practice is to anoint the five senses with the appropriate form of words, but in cases of necessity one anointing will suffice, as previously described. We may also state that it is agreed that when the organ is double it is sufficient for the validity of the sacrament to anoint one organ.[2] If the sick person has lost a member the part of the body nearest to it should be anointed. The unction of the eyes should not be omitted in the case of persons blind from birth, and the same applies to the respective organs of the deaf and dumb.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

We have now to consider the manner in which this sacrament is to be administered. The object of the practical instructions which follow is to ensure that the sacrament may be given with due

[1] It is now the practice of the Roman Church to omit altogether the anointing of the loins. See Davis, *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, vol. iv, p. 11.

[2] i.e. suppose the patient is lying on his side and unable to assume another position, it would be sufficient to anoint one ear, etc. The custom of anointing the five senses seems to have been universal from the earliest times in the West.

reverence and in an orderly manner ; in cases of emergency the priest will rest contented with making the best preparations possible under the circumstances.

A table should be prepared in the following way : It is covered with a clean cloth, and has upon it a crucifix and candles, as in the case of administering the Viaticum.[1] In fact, if Unction follows the Viaticum the same table will be used. Besides this will be required (i) a plate which contains six or seven little balls of cotton wool ; (ii) some bread-crumbs ; (iii) a basin of water and a towel.

The priest is vested in surplice and violet stole, and should, if possible, have at least one attendant to assist him in administering the sacrament. It is also desirable that some of the relatives and friends of the sick person be present to aid him with their prayers. The order of service according to the present Western use is given as an appendix to this chapter, and the order of the 1549 Prayer Book will be found on pages 303–4. The preliminary prayers are now said, unless the condition of the patient is very serious, in which case they may be omitted, and the priest will at once proceed to anoint the sick person. If there is an attendant present he should hold a candle in one hand and the plate containing the balls of cotton wool in the other ; he stands at a convenient distance from the priest. The priest performs the anointings by pressing the ball of the thumb of the right hand into the vessel containing the holy oil absorbed in cotton wool ; he then makes the sign of the Cross on the parts to be anointed, and afterwards wipes the parts with one of the balls of cotton wool provided for the purpose.

[1] If Unction alone is to be administered one candle will suffice.

With regard to the anointing of each particular organ, the following directions, based on O'Kane, are given: The eyes are the first organs to be anointed; they should be closed and the oil applied to the eyelids. The priest will anoint the right eye while saying the words, 'Through this Holy Unction,' and the left before he has completed the remaining words; by this means the words of the form are properly distributed throughout the entire unction, and this will be observed in anointing the other double organs. When the organ is double the priest always begins with the right. He makes the sign of the Cross by drawing, with his thumb, first a line downwards and then across from his left to right. After the anointing is finished he wipes the part anointed with the cotton wool; a fresh ball should be used for each unction, but where there are two unctions for a single sense, as in the present case, the same ball of wool may be used, and he need not wipe the parts until he has completed both. The used cotton wool should not be put back on the plate, but placed in a little bag carried by the priest; he can then take it back to the church, burn it, and throw the ashes into the piscina. An alternative is to burn both the wool and the breadcrumbs used in cleansing the fingers in the fire in the sick room.

The ears are anointed on the lobes or lower extremities; the words should not be completed until the second unction is applied. The nose is usually anointed with two unctions, one on either nostril; the custom of making one anointing on the extremity of the nose also exists. The mouth is anointed with one unction, the lips being pressed together; if, however, the patient has difficulty in breathing the unction should be applied to the upper or under lip alone. The hands are to be

anointed on the palms, first the right and then the left. The Roman Ritual prescribes that the hands of a priest receiving this sacrament should be anointed on the back, probably because the palms of his hands were anointed at his ordination.

When the priest has completed the unctions he returns to the table, and, after placing the vessel containing the oil upon it, he first rubs his thumb and fingers upon the breadcrumbs, in order to cleanse them from any oil which may remain, and then washes his hands in the basin of water provided and dries them on the towel. The concluding prayers are now said, and since they express most clearly the hope of the bodily recovery of the patient, should be of great comfort to him.

When the service is ended the priest replaces the holy oil vessel in its case, and, if the cotton wool and crumbs are to be taken back to the church, he will also take charge of these. It is fitting for the priest, before leaving the room, to address some words of comfort to the sick person, and, if possible, he should try to be with him in his last agony to give him the benefit of his ministrations.

APPENDIX
TO CHAPTER IV

THE ORDER OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME UNCTION[1]

According to present Western Use

On entering the sick man's chamber the Priest will say, 'Peace be to this house and to all that dwell in it'; he then places the oil on the table prepared and, if he be not already vested, at once puts on the surplice and violet stole. He presents a Cross to the sick person that he may kiss it, and then sprinkles the sick person, the room, and all who are present with holy water, saying the Asperges. If the sick person has not very recently made his confession the Priest should then give him an opportunity of confessing, or should at least exhort him to fresh acts of contrition, or console and encourage him. He then proceeds :

℣. Our help is in the Name of the Lord.
℟. Who hath made heaven and earth.
℣. The Lord be with you.
℟. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

We humbly beseech Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, that as we Thy servants enter into this house, we may bring with us everlasting happiness, divine prosperity, unclouded gladness, fruitful charity, and perpetual health : let no evil spirits approach this place : let Angels of peace draw nigh, and let all strife and envy cease. Magnify upon us, O Lord, Thy Holy Name ; and bl✠ess our conversation ; sanctify our humble entrance, for Thou art holy and gracious, and abidest with the Father and the Holy Ghost world without end. Amen.

[1] The Order of Service here given is from the *Rituale Romanum*.

Let us pray and beseech our Lord Jesus Christ, that in blessing He may bless this place, and all who dwell herein, and give unto them a good Angel for Guardian, and make them serve Him, that they may see the wondrous things of His law. May He turn from them all adverse powers; may He deliver them from all fear and disquiet and vouchsafe to preserve them in health in this place. Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth God world without end. Amen.

Let us pray.

Hear us, O Holy Lord, Almighty Father, Everlasting God; and vouchsafe to send Thy holy Angel from heaven, to keep, cherish, guard, visit, and defend all who dwell in this place Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The foregoing prayers may be partially or wholly omitted if time will not permit or if the administration of Holy Communion or the Office of the Visitation of the Sick has immediately preceded.

Then shall be said the General Confession by the sick person or by some one on his behalf, and the Priest will give the absolution. He will then invite all who are present to pray for the sick person while he is administering the Unction. They should do so kneeling: the Penitential Psalms or the Litany are the most appropriate devotions, and should be recited in so low a tone as not to disturb the Priest in his ministrations. The Priest proceeds:

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, may all the power of the devil be quenched in thee by the laying on of our hands and by the prayers of all the holy Angels, Archangels, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and all Saints. Amen. (*The three signs of the Cross are to be made over the sick person.*)

The Priest then at once proceeds to anoint the sick person, saying at the Unction of the eyes:

THROUGH this Holy Unction, and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by seeing. Amen.

Of the ears,

THROUGH this Holy Unction, and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by hearing. Amen.

Of the nostrils,

THROUGH this Holy Unction ✠, and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by smelling. Amen.

Of the mouth,

THROUGH this Holy Unction ✠, and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by taste and unlawful conversation. Amen.

Of the hands,

THROUGH this Holy Unction ✠, and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by touching. Amen.

[*Of the feet,*

THROUGH this Holy Unction ✠, and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by walking. Amen.]

[*Of the loins,*

THROUGH this Holy Unction ✠, and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by the pleasures of the flesh. Amen.]

The Unctions ended, the Priest says :

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Our Father.

℣. And lead us not into temptation
℟. But deliver us from evil.
℣. O Lord, save Thy servant ;
℟. Which putteth *his* trust in Thee.
℣. Send *him* help from Thy holy place ;
℟ And evermore mightily defend *him*.
℣. Be unto *him*, O Lord, a strong tower ;
℟. From the face of *his* enemy.
℣. Let the enemy have no advantage of *him* ;
℟ Nor the wicked approach to hurt *him*.
℣. O Lord, hear my prayer.
℟. And let my cry come unto Thee.
℣. The Lord be with you.
℟. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

O Lord God, Who by Thy Apostle James hast said, 'Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him'; Cure, we beseech Thee, O our Redeemer, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, the weakness of this sick person, heal *his* wounds and put away *his* sins; cast out from *him* all pains of mind and body and mercifully restore *him* to full health, both inwardly and outwardly, that being made whole by the help of Thy mercy, *he* may return again to *his* duties as of old. Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, God, world without end. Amen.

Let us pray.

Look down, O Lord, we beseech Thee, upon this Thy servant *N.*, fainting in weakness of body, and refresh the soul which Thou hast created, that, corrected by Thy chastisement, *he* may feel *himself* saved by Thy medicine. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray.

O Holy Lord, Almighty Father, Everlasting God, Who, by pouring the grace of Thy blessing upon sick bodies, dost preserve by Thy manifold goodness the work of Thy Hands, graciously draw near as we call upon Thy Name: Deliver Thy servant from *his* sickness, and give *him* health: raise *him* up by Thy Right Hand, strengthen *him* by Thy might, defend *him* by Thy power, and with hope fulfilled restore *him* to Thy Holy Church. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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